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LETTERS

ON THE

PHILOSOPHY OF THE HUMAN MIND.

Works on Mental Philosophy by the same Author.

ESSAYS ON THE FORMATION AND PUBLICATION OF OPINIONS. Third Edition, 1 vol. 8vo.

ESSAYS ON THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH AND ON THE PROGRESS OF KNOWLEDGE. Second Edition, 1 vol. 8vo.

A REVIEW OF BERKELEY'S THEORY OF VISION. 1 vol. 8vo.

THE THEORY OF REASONING. Second Edition, 1 vol. 8vo.

DISCOURSES ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS, Literary and Philosophical. 1 vol. 8vo.

LONDON:
A. and G. A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-street-Square.

LETTERS

ON THE

PHILOSOPHY OF THE HUMAN MIND.

BY SAMUEL BAILEY.

FIRST SERIES.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.
1855.

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PREFACE.

THE origin and design of the following Treatise being fully set forth in the Introductory Letter, it remains only to say that the discussions contained in the volume form a series, which (should the casualties of life permit) will be probably followed at no distant time by another or others on kindred topics.

A cursory inspection of the Table of Contents will show that the author has not yet touched upon a number of related questions of an interesting character, and presenting a wide field for free investigation. On some of these he

hopes, sooner or later, to be able to state the views which a long and patient consideration of them has suggested to his mind.

Norbury, near Sheffield, Feb. 20th, 1855.

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LETTERS

ON THE

PHILOSOPHY OF THE HUMAN MIND.

LETTER I.

ORIGIN AND DESIGN OF THE PRESENT SERIES OF LETTERS.

My dear Friend,

You have frequently expressed a wish that I would give you, and eventually the public, a methodical exposition of those views in the Philosophy of the Human Mind which we have so repeatedly, although informally, discussed together.

Against this I can urge neither want of leisure nor want of interest in the subject; and it would be an affectation of modesty to disclaim such an amount of qualification for the task as may be implied by an almost unintermitting meditation upon the principal questions of Philosophy during the greater part of a life which can no longer be termed brief.

The chief obstacle in the way of complying with your request is, I confess, want of adequate motive; or, if you will, that kind of mental indolence which is not seldom the fruit of it. The requisite materials are already in my mind, I may say, indeed, already stored in various manuscript volumes, although put down in detached memoranda without much method, finish, or connexion.

You know as well as myself the pleasure of mastering (in one's own fancy at least) difficult and interesting subjects, and discussing them in the desultory way of random notes or friendly conversation; but the process of reducing such speculations to order and precise expression — digesting them, as it is significantly termed, into a methodical treatise — connecting the disparted, marshalling the disorderly, supplying the deficient, labouring at transitions, consulting authorities and verifying assertions and references — constitutes altogether a very different affair. The delight of novelty and invention, of expatiating at will and skipping when convenient, is gone, and the drudgery of task-work succeeds. For this formidable labour some strong motive seems essential. You have named several; the hope of distinction as one, the prospect of enlightening the world as another — you very wisely did not mention pecuniary profit as a third. But of attaining these ends I see small probability. With regard to the first, I do not apprehend that even the successful accom-

plishment of such a task would greatly extend the reputation, wide or narrow, which any author might before possess; and as for illuminating the world, to the difficulty of furnishing the light must be added the rather considerable impediment that the world is not sensible of being in the dark, and cares nothing for such elucidations. In a word, little effect would result in any way from the publication of a work which could hardly promise itself a score of readers. Where, then, is the inducement for undertaking what you propose? except it be that, taking ages into view, no earnest effort after truth on any subject can be regarded as altogether fruitless; and that the study of philosophy, although it will always be confined to a few, must not on that account be abandoned nor its results suppressed. At all events I have come to the resolution of partially at least acceding to your wishes. Without the formality of a regular treatise, I can, I think, succinctly explain in a series of letters addressed to yourself whatever is essential and peculiar in the views I entertain.

There is an objection in some minds to the treatment of such subjects otherwise than in formal discourses or dissertations. For my part I care little for the mere shape, and would have the philosopher indulge in any form that may happen to please his fancy, whether Essay, Discourse, Dialogue, Lecture, or Epistle. If he has anything to communicate he will probably do it best in the way which his

own taste prescribes : and, whatever that may be, the real method — the arrangement of his thoughts — will, with equal pains, be much the same. I never could enter into Mr. Stewart's objection to Horne Tooke's throwing his etymological speculations into the form of dialogue. It was doubtless the mode best suited to the genius of the man.*

In this series of letters it is not my intention to aim at giving an account of the whole province of mental philosophy, which would of course involve the repetition of much that has become trite and familiar. I do not contemplate the construction of a system in which every pertinent topic must have its place ; nor yet the composition of an elementary treatise simplifying what is complicated, and making the whole level, as the phrase is, to the meanest capacity : but only an exposition of those parts of the subject on which I seem to myself (erroneously perhaps) to have something new to say, or something not sufficiently recognised to enforce, or which I may hope to place in a clearer light than has hitherto fallen upon them. Hence, although I shall study to be plain and perspicuous, even at the risk of being deemed superficial, I must of necessity take for granted a certain degree of acquaintance on the part of the reader with philosophical questions.

* Stewart's Essays, p. 232.

The design here announced will not, I trust, be construed as an attempt to produce exclusively something novel and unheard of, instead of what it really will be, an endeavour to select from a wide range of speculation such views as are least likely to have been before presented to the student of philosophy. When an author submits his productions to the public, it is of course implied that he conceives them to contain something new either in matter or manner, else why obtrude them on his neighbours? But still, on first embarking in the inquiry which led to them, he very probably dreamed of nothing more than understanding the subject for his own satisfaction. To set out indeed upon any investigation expressly and purely for the sake of being personally original, or discovering for himself some fortunate novelty, I hold to be one of the last things which a genuine lover of knowledge would think of. Too intent for any such project on finding out what is true, on seizing the very heart of a question, on mastering the whole bearings of a doctrine,—and too glad at all times to be spared the labour of research and reflection by the lucid and complete expositions of his predecessors, when he can meet with them, — it may be safely asserted that his mind has no room for the mere ambition of novelty, although, being human, he cannot fail to be gratified whenever novelty appears to be the result of his inquiries.

In such an attempt as I have here described, I

shall of necessity come into frequent collision with the doctrines of preceding philosophers. This I shall neither sedulously avoid nor yet purposely seek, except as it may contribute to the elucidation of the subject; and I do not mention it as requiring apology, although some of them are writers of deservedly high reputation, for whom I entertain unfeigned respect.

In an age of remarkable progress, in which various systems of false thought and piles of hypothetical facts have crumbled into dust before the steady march of sober science, it would, doubtless, appear somewhat out of season and even ludicrous to apologise for the effects of methodical and careful inquiry on received doctrines and established reputations, be those doctrines and their authors what and who they may.

In respect to the latter, it is a consideration worth weighing by such minds as are more tenacious of personal reputations than anxious for truth, that the manifestation of ability is not to be measured by the permanence of its results, and remains as a fact, conferring perennial renown after the doctrine which called it forth has been stripped of its errors, or wholly superseded.

But, on the subject of my present attempt, a direct scrutiny of facts, independent of preceding opinions, combined with a free and unreserved discussion of such opinions, is, perhaps, more needed than on any other; for it is remarkable

that, although each one has in his own breast all the materials of psychology, yet is he peculiarly prone to take his views regarding it from his predecessors, as if in former times they were nearer to it than we are at the actual moment; as if they possessed some great advantage in studying it over ourselves. Hence he is too apt to look at it from the point of view which has become traditional, instead of taking a survey of it from his own station, and trusting his own eyes.

But it is plain, on reflection, that all the mental operations and affections which constitute the matter of the science are experienced by all of us now as fully as they ever were by any human beings that ever existed. Former ages, whether remote or recent, enjoyed, to say the least, no superiority over the present in point of nearness to the subject, or in any other imaginable way; nor is there the shadow of a reason that we should take implicitly their account of a matter which is perfectly and perpetually open to our own scrutiny, any more than that we should content ourselves with relying on their knowledge of the elementary composition of bodies and on their science of the stars. In each case alike, the field for observation is spread out to us as it was to them, without the necessity of trying to look at it exclusively from their point of view, or with their antiquated microscopic or telescopic instruments; nor is this freedom of examination, as I have already hinted,

and as Pascal long ago remarked, at all incompatible with the truest respect for the abilities and acquirements of the really eminent amongst our predecessors.

Having thus indicated the position which the following speculations design to take, I shall defer the commencement of the subject to another letter.

LETTER II.

METHODS OF INVESTIGATING AND SPEAKING OF THE FACTS OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

It seems singular to me that there should ever have been any doubt as to the mode of studying the subject before us.

The proper method of investigating the facts of consciousness can surely be no other than that which is pursued in physical inquiry. Phenomena are to be observed, discriminated, and classified, and general laws to be inferred from them.

What we have to consider in this department of knowledge, are the mental states and operations of the human being, the causes which produce them, the manner in which they accompany or succeed each other, and the resemblances and differences which we discern amongst them. There is here as plain a field for inquiry as that which is presented to us by the world without; there is an equal call in both cases for rigorous method, for keeping to facts, for discarding mere gratuitous assumptions, and for the scrupulous restriction of every word to one precise and uniform sense; while in dealing with states and events of con-

sciousness, there is, perhaps, a greater demand for nice and subtile discrimination than in treating material phenomena.

In entering upon the ground before us, it is especially needful to note, and I would emphatically press it on your attention, that it is the human being — the man — who perceives and remembers and thinks and feels and reasons and wills, not something distinct or apart from him; and these are the simplest phrases we can employ to designate the acts or events in question.

We speak, indeed, of his mind perceiving and thinking and feeling, which is a ready and even natural mode of describing his states of consciousness or mental movements in contradistinction to those motions and affections of his physical frame which are to be learned from external observation; but in using such phraseology we gain nothing but convenience, and we should be especially careful not to allow it to lead us to any inferences which cannot be deduced equally well from considering and speaking of the human being himself as in action, or as the subject affected. You will find the utility of attending to the caution here given, in some long disputed and perplexing questions.

Adopting this method for the sake of convenience, and with the precaution indicated, we may speak of the states or acts of the human being when he perceives, remembers, imagines and reasons, as operations of the mind under the names

of perception, memory, imagination, and reasoning. In like manner we may speak of his affections when he rejoices, sorrows, fears, and hopes, as emotions or feelings of the mind instead of the man; but by such phraseology, commodious and indispensable as it is, we do not make the slightest advance either in knowledge or in the explanation of what we know.

All these may also be correctly spoken of as states or events, or phenomena of consciousness; expressions which are equivalent to the other phrases, but add nothing to them. We do not both perceive, remember, reason, rejoice, and feel conscious of perceiving, remembering, reasoning and rejoicing, or rather, these phrases do not designate separate acts or states; perceiving is one state or mode of consciousness, remembering is another, reasoning is another, rejoicing is another.

The contrary of this is, nevertheless, frequently asserted; as, for example, by Dr. Reid, and more recently by M. Cousin, who says, "It is not by consciousness that we feel, or will, or think; but it is by it we know that we do all this;" which is tantamount to saying that by consciousness we know we are conscious.

In a similar way, a very sensible writer on Intellectual Philosophy tells us, that consciousness is "the faculty by which the various powers of our own minds are made known to us*;" a kind of

* Elements of Intellectual Philosophy, by R. E. Scott, p. 27.

phraseology to which I shall have immediately to call your especial attention.

You will probably have observed that I have designated perception, memory, conception, imagination, and reasoning as *operations* of the mind.

They are often, however (as by the last author I have had occasion to quote), termed faculties, capacities, or powers; and in popular discourse with great advantage in respect of ease and variety of expression, and with sufficient precision for ordinary purposes; but these are forms of speech from which in accurate speculation we derive little or no assistance, while we are frequently misled by them.

Whatever a man does, whether he perceives or recollects, or imagines, or reasons, or feels, or wills, he must doubtless have the power or faculty, or capacity of doing; just as all other animated beings or inanimate substances must have the power of doing whatever they effect. There is, however, nothing gained to clear or scientific knowledge by introducing the capability in addition to the statement of the simple act, although as a mode of expression it is frequently convenient. "Water quenches thirst," is as expressive as "water has the power of quenching thirst." "Heat melts lead," conveys as much as "heat has the power of melting lead." "The loadstone attracts iron" is as significant as the assertion that it has the power of so affecting that metal.

So in the case of mental operations: the expres-

sion "man perceives, and remembers, and imagines, and reasons," denotes all that is conveyed by the longer phrase, "the mind of man has the faculties of perception, and memory, and imagination, and reasoning." "Man hopes, and fears, and rejoices, and grieves," is a form of speech which expresses just the same meaning as the more circuitous and sonorous phraseology, "the mind of man is endowed with the susceptibilities, or subject to the affections of hope, and fear, and joy, and grief." Further illustrations would be superfluous. Independently of the disadvantages which in science must always attend circuitous, tautological, and figurative expressions that add nothing to the sense, such language in mental philosophy gives rise to particular evils which require especial attention at the outset; and these I purpose to exhibit at a length in some degree proportioned to their importance.

Do not, I implore you, be startled at the prospect of having some of your usual and favourite phrases proscribed. I am speaking of language now merely as an instrument of investigation and of philosophical statement, not as a vehicle of common intercourse, sentiment, and emotion. I wish not to deprive the poetical, the rhetorical, the sensitive, the romantic, or even the innumerable writers and conversers on ordinary topics, of any of their cherished expressions; and, indeed, should be sorry to lose them myself, when, quitting the path of methodical inquiry, I enter into common life, or into the sphere of fancy, taste, and feeling.

LETTER III.

PERSONIFICATION OF THE FACULTIES.

THE various forms of speech pointed out in my last letter as more or less prolix and circuitous, although they are perfectly unobjectionable and even needful in common discourse, have led, in philosophical speculation, to great errors, to much perplexity, and to no little mischievous jargon.

One of the chief consequences of such modes of speaking has been that the powers and faculties and susceptibilities to which the operations and affections of the mind are thus ascribed, or under which they are thus grouped, have been personified so to speak, or erected into separate entities distinct from the man himself. They have been represented as acting in the character of independent agents, originating ideas, passing them from one to another, and transacting other business amongst themselves. In this species of phraseology the mind frequently appears a sort of field in which perception, recollection, imagination, reason, will, conscience, and the passions, carry on their operations, like so many powers in alliance with or in hostility to each other. Sometimes one of these powers is supreme and

the others are subordinate; one usurps authority and another submits; one reports and others listen; one deludes and another is deceived. Meanwhile, the mind, or rather the intellectual being himself, is jostled out of sight altogether by transactions in which he appears to have no concern. At other times these powers are described as having dealings with their owner, or master, lending him ministerial assistance, acting under his control or direction, supplying him with evidence or instruction, and enlightening him by revelations, as if he himself were detached or apart from the faculties which he is said to possess and command, and to which he is represented as listening.

The same remarks may be extended to the senses, which are often spoken of as independent of the mind. The *organs* of the senses are doubtless distinct from the mind,—part of the physical frame—but the senses themselves are not separate from the mind. When they are affected (to speak according to common phraseology), such affections are modifications of the mind. When a man sees or hears or feels tactually, it is he himself—the conscious being—who does so, as much as when he thinks, or rejoices, or grieves. To say that his senses do these things, is on a level with using the expressions about reason and imagination performing certain acts to which I have already adverted. It is personifying the senses and raising them into distinct entities; whereas they are in truth mental

susceptibilities acted upon, or mental affections produced, or, as I should prefer saying, intellectual discernment exercised through the organs of the physical frame. Nor does the matter stop here; but even ideas which are sometimes spoken of as the material or product in which the faculties deal, or about which they are concerned, are themselves personified and held up as independent agents. When such personifications as these become habitual and their character is overlooked, it is not wonderful that extraordinary and even extravagant doctrines are the result.

The danger of the practice seems to have struck Hobbes, who incidentally notices, "that metaphorical speech of attributing command and subjection to the faculties of the soul, as if they made a commonwealth or family within themselves and could speak one to another, which is very improper in searching the truth of a question."*

Locke, in one part of his great Essay, seems fully alive to the evil consequences of such phraseology, although he has not, by any means, succeeded in avoiding it. "I suspect," he says, "that this way of speaking of faculties has led many into a confused notion of so many distinct agents in us, which had their several provinces and authorities, and did command, obey, and perform several actions as so many distinct beings; which has been no small

* Of Liberty and Necessity.

occasion of wrangling, obscurity, and uncertainty in questions relating to them."*

Leibnitz, too, notices the subject in his "New Comments on the Essay on Human Understanding." In this work, which, you are aware, is in Dialogue, he introduces a disciple of Locke under the name of Philalethes as saying, "We commonly speak of the understanding and the will as two faculties of the soul, a sufficiently convenient term if we make use of it, as we ought to make use of all words, with due precaution that they shall not give rise to any confusion in men's thoughts, which I suspect has been the case here. And when it is said that the will is that superior faculty of the soul which regulates and orders all things; that it is or is not free; that it rules the inferior faculties; that it follows the dictates of the understanding; although these expressions may be understood in a clear and distinct sense, yet I fear, nevertheless, that they have suggested to many persons the confused idea of so many agents who have their distinct action within us."

In answer to this, the other interlocutor, Theophilus, who speaks for the author himself, remarks, "This is a question which has exercised the schools for a long time, to wit, whether there is a real distinction between the soul and its faculties. The Realists have said yes, the Nominalists no. And the same question has been agitated about the

* Essay, book 2. chap. 21.

reality of several other *Abstract Entities*, which must follow the fate of the others. But I do not think it needful to decide this question here, and to plunge amongst these thorns."*

Some of the doctrines to which this language has led I shall hereafter examine; but at present I shall content myself with citing a few specimens of current phraseology from eminent writers, in order to substantiate or elucidate the representations I have given, whether the passages exhibit only traditional forms of speech, or are merely casual lapses into such expressions without further result, or indicate essential features in a philosophical system, or show how speculation may be led astray by the loose and inconsiderate employment of words.

The incidental use of the phraseology here spoken of is frequent even with Locke, who, as we have seen, was fully aware of the evils to which it might lead. In one place he speaks of the mind being every day *informed by the senses;* in another of reason *procuring our assent;* and in a third he curiously enough asserts that *the mind furnishes the understanding* with the ideas of its own operations.

Instances abound in which the intelligence is stated to be communicated, not by one faculty to another, as in these passages from Locke, but by

* Nouveaux Essais sur l'Entendement Humain, livre 2. chap. 21. In Erdman's edition of Leibnitz's Opera Philosophica, p. 251.

some of them to the owner himself. "Our senses," says Hume, "inform us of the colour, weight, and consistence of bread; but neither sense nor reason can ever inform us of those qualities which fit it for the nourishment and support of the human body." * "It is the business of memory," remarks Leibnitz, "to retain what we know, and of reminiscence to represent it to us." † Dr. Reid in his Essays says, "When we attend to any change that happens in nature, judgment informs us that there must be a cause of this change." ‡

And, in another passage of the same Essay, he speaks of the several faculties delivering their testimony — of course to their possessor, to whom nature in her bounty had, we are told, presented the whole set of intellectual powers enumerated. His words are, "Thus the faculties of consciousness, of memory, of external sense, and of reason, are all equally the gifts of nature. No good reason can be assigned for receiving the testimony of one of them, which is not of equal force with regard to the others. The greatest sceptics admit the testimony of consciousness, and allow that what it testifies is to be held as a first principle."

Dr. Beattie supplies us with a passage in which one faculty is asserted to have rightful predominance over another. "All sound reasoning must

* Sceptical Doubts.

† Nouveaux Essais sur l'Entendement Humain, liv. 1, chap. 1.

‡ Essays on the Powers of the Mind, Essay 6. chap. 1.

ultimately rest," he says, "on the principles of common sense, that is, on principles intuitively certain or intuitively probable; and consequently common sense is the ultimate judge of truth, to which reason must continually act in subordination."*

In a similar strain Dr. Reid had previously said, "Methinks, therefore, it were better to make a virtue of necessity; and since we cannot get rid of the vulgar notion and belief of an external world, to reconcile our reason to it as well as we can; for if Reason should stomach and fret ever so much at this yoke, she cannot throw it off: if she will not be the servant of Common Sense, she must be her slave."†

In the following extract there is also an attribution of superiority, as well as a description of one set of faculties engaged in observing events and making a report of their observations to another. "The world has been likened," says the learned author of Hermes, "to a variety of things, but it appears to resemble no one more than some moving spectacle (such as a procession or a triumph) that abounds in every part with splendid objects, some of which are still departing as fast as others make their appearance. The senses look on while the sight passes, perceiving as much as is immediately

* Essay on Truth, part 1. chap. 1.

† Inquiry into the Human Mind, chap. 5. sect. 7.

present, which they report with tolerable accuracy to the soul's superior powers." *

So we are told by Père Buffier, that "the senses always give a faithful report of what appears to them;" and that "the senses never deceive us, but we deceive ourselves by our own indiscretion with respect to the faithful report of our senses." †

An extract or two from the writings of Pascal will exhibit the fanciful way of speaking in reference to the reciprocal action and counteraction of the faculties, which had, in his time, become traditional, and in fact still remains so.

He differs from Père Buffier, it will be observed, with regard to the faithfulness of the senses, although on this point he is by no means consistent. ‡ "*Reason* and *the senses*," he says, "the two principles of truth, besides that they are not always sincere, *reciprocally delude each other.* The senses delude the reason by false appearances; and the trickery they practise is passed on themselves in return. Reason takes its revenge. The passions of the soul disturb the senses, and make upon them vexatious impressions. They vie with each other in deceiving and being deceived." §

Again. "I shall confine myself therefore to such

* Harris's Hermes, book 1. chap. 7.

† First Truths, part 1. chap. 16.

‡ "The mind," he says in another place, "is naturally correct in its perceptions of what it sees, just as the notices of the senses are always true."—*Detached Moral Thoughts.*

§ Thoughts. On the Uncertainty of Natural Knowledge.

truths as lie within our reach; and in reference to these I say, that the *understanding* and *the heart are the gates* by which they are admitted into the soul; but that very few enter by *the understanding*, while on the other hand they are introduced in crowds without the counsel *of reason*, by the rash caprices of *the will*."*

An expression in one of Dugald Stewart's "Philosophical Essays," curiously enough illustrates the looseness of phraseology on these subjects in which philosophers indulge: he gravely maintains that "the exercise of a particular faculty furnishes the occasion on which certain simple notions are by the laws of our constitution presented to our thoughts."† Notions presented to thoughts!

Dr. Brown, although aware of the evil effects of such language, is not much behind his master, when he tells us, that the mind "must, by the very nature of the feelings, be a believer in the outward things which its perceptions seem to point out to it."‡

And Kant, to whose peculiarities of expression I shall by and by more particularly advert, personifying acts of the mind in a similar strain, affirms that "certain cognitions, by means of conceptions, extend the compass of our judgments."

* Thoughts. On the Art of Persuasion.
† Philosophical Essays, p. 82.
‡ Sketch of a System, p. 117.

From countless other writers similar passages to those already cited might be adduced. One other I will here quote for the purpose of drawing your attention to a form of speech already incidentally noticed, which is common to many of them. "Our senses," says one writer, "inform us of the existence of certain sensible qualities; our reason tells us that these qualities must be qualities of something."

Here, as in many of the preceding extracts, it will be observed that our senses and our reason are spoken of as things distinct from ourselves as well as from each other; and we, being apart from those faculties, *i. e.* without senses and reason, are still capable of receiving information from them.

In regard to the expressions quoted about the information and evidence of our senses, if it be alleged that the organs of the senses are meant, the matter would not be greatly bettered. In that case it would be something like saying that for an object seen through a window we have the evidence of the glass.

It is not always that the separation of the faculties from ourselves is merely implied; it is occasionally distinctly asserted. Cudworth, for example, says, "In false opinions the perception of the understanding power is not false but only obscure. It is *not the understanding power* or nature in us that erreth, but it is *we ourselves* who

err, when we rashly and unwarily assent to things not clearly perceived by it."*

This distinct separation of our powers from ourselves has been still more explicitly maintained by later writers, as I shall have immediately to notice.

Perhaps the phraseology on which I am animadverting has been carried to the greatest extreme by Kant and his followers, some of whose doctrines, as I may hereafter have occasion to point out, are founded on the personification of the faculties, and the fabrication of other entities out of the mere forms of language. At present I restrict myself to citing instances in which the language animadverted upon occurs.

It is the doctrine of Kant, we are told, that "sensibility has given us intuitions; understanding has given us conceptions; reason reduces the variety of conceptions to their utmost unity."

Here *we* are separate from sensibility, understanding, and reason, and in this destitute condition are indebted to those faculties for imparting to us their respective productions, namely, intuitions, conceptions, and conclusions. It may be fairly asked, What is there left in *us* when thus denuded capable of receiving such contributions?

Other examples abound in the writings of this philosopher. Here is another version of the same

* Intellectual System, book 1. chap. 5. In the edition before me, dated 1845, in 3 vols., the above passage occurs, vol. 3 p. 34.

doctrine: "All our cognition begins from the senses — proceeds thence to the understanding — and finishes in reason, beyond which nothing higher is met with in us to elaborate and to bring under the highest unity of thought, the matter of the intuition." *

In this description, knowledge migrates from one faculty to another, till, on getting to the work-shop of reason, it is elaborated into the highest unity of thought.

He says, in another place, "Neither of these faculties or capacities can exchange its functions. The understanding cannot perceive, and the senses cannot think." †

These passages exhibit the faculties acting as independent entities, without reference to the owner, except as a recipient of their bounty. The following one is a good instance of the ministerial assistance, which he on other occasions is represented as deriving from them.

"In every syllogism," says Kant, "I first think a rule (major) by means of the *understanding*. Secondly, I subsume a cognition under the condition of the rule (minor) by means of the *faculty of judgment*. Lastly, I determine my cognition by means of the predicate of the rule (conclusio), consequently a priori *by reason*." ‡

* Critick of Pure Reason. Of Reason in General.
† Ibid. Of Logic in General.
‡ Ibid. Of the Logical Use of Reason.

Thus the intelligent being, like a constitutional monarch, transacts all regular business through his ministers; as if the Understanding were Secretary of State for the Home Department; the faculty of Judgment, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas; and Reason, First Lord of the Treasury.

Sometimes one faculty is exhibited as devolving affairs of a certain description on another: *Pure reason,*" says Kant, "leaves every thing *to the understanding* which refers immediately to the objects of the intuition, or rather to their synthesis in the imagination."*

Cousin almost surpasses Kant in this kind of language.

"The senses," he says, "attest the existence of concrete quantities and bodies; consciousness, the internal sense, attests the presence of a succession of thoughts, and of all the phenomena which pertain to personal identity. But at the same time reason intervenes and pronounces that the relations of the quantites in question are abstract, universal, and necessary."† The man seems here set aside, while the senses, consciousness, and reason, do all the work for him.

The following is another instance of strange phraseology by the same author.

"In my theory, intellectual intuition, without

* Critick of Pure Reason. Of Transcendental Ideas.

† Elements of Psychology, p. 150. being a translation from Cousin, published under that title by Dr. Henry, United States.

being personal and subjective, attains to the knowledge of being, from the bosom of consciousness." Here not only is the man set aside, but the reader is bewildered by the disguise under which what may possibly be very simple facts are presented.

Again, the same writer tells us:—

"Sensation by itself is deprived of all light, and does not know itself, while reason knows itself and knows all the rest, and goes beyond the sphere of 'the me,' because it does not belong to me." *

In this and other analogous passages, following certain German and even English philosophers, he turns reason out of the mind altogether, and treats it as a sort of external light, thus carrying the representation of the faculties as distinct entities to its utmost extreme. "Reason," he says, in another place, "although connected with personality, is essentially distinct from it." Once more, he describes reason as filling the most various parts: first, being one of the elements of consciousness; secondly, lending it a foundation; and thirdly, constituting its light.

"Consciousness," he says, "although composed of three integrant and inseparable elements, borrows its most immediate foundation from reason, without which no knowledge would be possible, and consequently no consciousness. Sensibility is the external condition of consciousness; the will is its centre; and reason its light."

* Fragmens Philosophiques. Preface, p. 22.

I foresee that you (or if not you some one else) will be up in arms in defence of many of the expressions I have quoted. You will taunt me, perhaps, with hypercriticism; with a prosaic hostility to metaphorical language; with fastidious comments, which, if heeded, could tend only to the impoverishment of style. "What evil," I hear you exclaim, "can arise from figurative phrases of this description, so requisite for the vivacity, if not for the existence, of composition? Your next objection, I suppose, will be to the personifications of poetry. Woe to such lines as

> 'These shall the fiery passions tear,
> The vultures of the mind,
> Disdainful Anger, pallid Fear,
> And Shame that skulks behind.'

As to figurative language generally, you yourself cannot possibly avoid it. I will undertake to find in the Series of Letters you are now writing a hundred instances in which you slide, without being able to stop yourself, into metaphorical expressions and even personifications such as you condemn."

Doubtless you may: but I must entreat you to reserve your burst of feeling till you have seen farther into the views which I have to unfold, when I hope your very natural and laudable fervour in vindication of your old friends will subside of itself.

I do not, I repeat, object to the prevalent mode of speaking of powers and faculties on ordinary occasions, any more than I object to the practice of a friend of mine who measures distances with tolerable accuracy by striding over the ground.

But the methodical investigation of the facts of consciousness is not an ordinary but a special business, requiring as much closeness in the description of phenomena and precision in the terms employed, as any department of physical or mathematical science; and he who will not trouble himself to aim at this precision (always very difficult of attainment) is as unfit for philosophical inquiry as my friend with his crural mode of ascertaining distances would be ill-calculated for measuring a whole country and rivalling the accuracy of a trigonometrical survey.

As another illustration I will add, that I would not willingly part with such convenient terms as reason, memory, understanding, conscience, will, and the rest, any more than I would dispense with such indefinite yet useful words as few, several, many, numerous: but as I should not much regard any writer on statistics who, instead of telling us that every marriage in a particular country produced on an average four children, and that three-fifths of the population could read and write, informed us that there were *several* offspring to a marriage and that *many* of the people possessed the humble accomplishments referred to; so I should

not expect much from a metaphysician who busied himself with describing the powers and faculties of the human mind, and their dealings with each other and with their owner, instead of simply tracing, classifying, and referring to their causes, the states or acts of which we are conscious.

LETTER IV.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRIES.

Before proceeding further it may be well to resume the particular topic slightly touched upon at the conclusion of my last letter,—the objection, namely, that the citations are many of them only samples of common forms and figures of speech, which it would be mere fastidiousness to reject, which are of little moment, and which may be regarded, in the main, as unexceptionable.

I am quite aware that some — indeed most — of the expressions I have cited, are metaphorical, not intended to be put to the torture of a literal construction; and are, in fact, the current phraseology of good writers: but at the same time I cannot grant that the use of such language by writers expressly engaged in philosophical inquiries is of small importance. Some of the passages which are only incidental examples were introduced along with others of a less inconsequential character, partly as a ready means of showing what the expressions thus employed as a matter of course really imply, and their want of adaptation to exact thinking; and partly because phraseology of this kind on common occasions, by inducing a habit of being content with the vague and the unmeaning, naturally smooths the way for laxity in the statement of

important doctrines, and consequently for erroneous conclusions. Language which in itself is perfectly unexceptionable in ordinary writing, thus easily becomes obstructive or delusive in philosophical speculations, such as those from which I have selected my principal examples. Loose phraseology especially of a metaphorical character, however sanctioned by custom, may be confidently pronounced incompatible, either in an author or in the reader who looks to him for instruction, with clear and precise thoughts on the subjects in the discussion of which it is employed; unless, indeed, the author perpetually keeps its character in view, and the reader is at the continual trouble of translating it into more exact expressions; efforts which, since they must be unceasing to be effectual, can be expected from neither.

It is hence an indispensable rule in the prosecution of science that facts should be stated in the simplest, the most direct, and least figurative language we can select: but if this can be requisite in one science more than another, it is in the philosophy of mind, in which we have no other resource than using terms borrowed from material phenomena and applied originally in a metaphorical sense, but subsequently worn, in many instances, into literal or half-literal and very unsteady acceptations. From this cause we are in mental science exposed to the perpetual danger of imposing on ourselves and others by vague and indefinite phrases. The

paramount aim of a writer in this department of inquiry should obviously be to send the reader in the directest manner to his own recollections of what he has perceived and thought and felt. Simplicity, perspicuity, precision and literalness are, for this purpose, alike demanded.

Although it is undoubtedly true that, from the very structure of language, and indeed from the very nature of the mind, figurative phrases cannot on these subjects be wholly excluded; yet they may be certainly avoided to a great extent, and such as, though originally metaphorical, have completely lost that character be preferred. The difficulty of doing it is one reason the more for the utmost care in the choice of our expressions. What need, for example, is there for a philosophical writer, when speaking of a moving spectacle or procession, to tell us, as Harris does in a sentence extracted in my last Letter, that "the senses look on and report to the soul's superior powers," meaning simply that we perceive what is passing?

There are, it appears to me, two principal evils to which figurative phrases in philosophical inquiries give rise.

1. Even when they are really illustrative or representative of facts, the mind is apt to be confused and misled by receiving from them either indefinite or false impressions, and to draw inferences forgetful of their symbolical character; a remark that will apply in some degree to formal similes as well

as to the briefer symbolical expedient of metaphors.

2. They are often, however, introduced without any basis of facts, without any real literal meaning corresponding to the metaphorical one, and thus usurp the place of knowledge; in other words, they are frequently expressive only of fictions, pleasing the imagination and satisfying the understanding with the mere semblance of significancy.

If you will turn to the two extracts from the writings of Pascal in my last Letter, you will find some illustration of these remarks. Observe how exceedingly figurative his expressions are; how bare of real meaning many of them appear; and how they even bewilder the author himself. In the first he speaks of reason and the senses tricking each other, and the former taking its revenge on the latter; but when he comes to describe the manner of it, we find that it is not reason but the passions which inflict the vengeance. In the second extract he describes the understanding and the heart as the gates for admitting truths into the soul, and complains, curiously enough, of the crowds —not of errors but of truths— which are admitted capriciously by the will; whereas one would think it desirable to admit truths even in crowds, and by the will or any other door or door-keeper. Such are the futility and confusion even in a profound philosopher, consequent on the careless and lavish use of metaphorical language in treating of the mind.

Locke goes so far as to condemn "figurative speeches and allusion" altogether, "in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct," and regards them as the invention of rhetoric to mislead the judgment; adding that, "where truth and knowledge are concerned they cannot but be thought a great fault either of the language or person that makes use of them." *

It is curious, however, to observe how freely he sometimes indulges in what he so rigorously condemns; as in that celebrated passage in which, with a beauty and pathos seldom exceeded, he speaks of the transitory character of our reminiscences.

"There seems to be a constant decay," he says, "of all our ideas, even of those which are struck deepest and in minds the most retentive; so that if they be not sometimes renewed by repeated exercise of the senses, or reflection on those kind of objects which at first occasioned them, the print wears out, and at last there is nothing to be seen. *Thus the ideas, as well as children, of our youth, often die before us: and our minds represent to us those tombs, to which we are approaching; where though the brass and marble remain, yet the inscriptions are effaced by time, and the imagery moulders away. The pictures drawn in our minds are laid in fading colours, and if not sometimes refreshed vanish and disappear.*" †

* Essay on Human Understanding, book 3. chap. 10.

† Ibid., book 2. chap. 10.

Here we have at least two similes and as many metaphors; and in the sequel to this passage he continues very happily to heap one figurative illustration on another.

Although in our admiration of all this we may acquit it (to use his own language) of insinuating wrong ideas and misleading the judgment, we cannot award to it the merit of contributing to the progress of the subject in hand.

In truth his trespasses in this respect against his own precept are rather conspicuous, and sometimes lead him astray.

It is remarkable, too, that Hume, when descanting upon the injurious effects on the pursuit of truth, of giving way to the imagination, indulges in a comparison which may be fairly placed, in point of felicity as well as momentary contravention of his own doctrine, on a level with any of the figurative illustrations of Locke.

"Nothing," he tells us, "is more dangerous to reason than the flights of the imagination, and nothing has been the occasion of more mistakes among philosophers. Men of bright fancies may in this respect be compared to those angels whom the Scripture represents as covering their eyes with their wings." *

Delighted as we may be at meeting with brilliant passages like these in the dreary pages of meta-

* Treatise on Human Nature, vol. 1. p. 352.

physical speculation, it is manifest that if they cannot be charged with embroiling our thoughts, they do not make us understand the subject better, or give precision to our knowledge; at the utmost they can only enliven it and impress it on the memory—exceedingly desirable effects when they can be obtained without the risk that Locke and Hume describe.

But there is less danger, if I mistake not, to precision of thought from similes than from metaphors. Similes are by their structure confessedly illustrations comparing two distinct things which cannot easily be confounded. Metaphors, on the other hand, although essentially of like character, represent or assert one thing by means of another; whence the symbolical is frequently taken as the literal meaning, and consequences are drawn from it accordingly which have no foundation in fact. The metaphor of Locke, Leibnitz, and others before and after them, describing ideas as being engraven on the mind, has had a share in begetting strange doctrines. Although similes are less apt to mislead in the same way, they sometimes give a wrong bias to our thoughts, and cause us to deem our apprehension of a subject to be more complete than it is.

I have little doubt that Locke's celebrated comparison of the understanding to a dark closet with a few little openings to let in ideas of things without, has tended to both these results.

Kant, who is redundant in figurative language,

as I shall hereafter have occasion to repeat, and is often led astray by it, has combined both the simile and the metaphor in the following passage; but, while he has encountered the danger incident to both, he has not succeeded, like Locke and Hume, in vividly impressing his own view on his readers. He seems to me to be trying to illustrate one imaginary circumstance by another when the points of analogy are anything but clear, and he soon becomes confused and obscure.

"The light dove," he writes, "whilst in its free flight it divides the air whose resistance it feels, might entertain the supposition that it would succeed much better in airless space. Just in the same way, Plato abandoned the sensible world, because it set such narrow limits to the understanding, and hazarded himself beyond it, upon the wings of ideas into the void space of the pure understanding: he did not remark that he made no way by his efforts, since he had no counter-pressure, as it were, for support, whereupon he could rest, and whereby he could employ his power in order to make the understanding move onward."* This is clumsy enough it must be owned, and altogether wanting in circumstances of analogy; and it scarcely needs indicating that Plato is here first represented as hazarding himself on the wings of ideas in the void space of the understanding, and

* Critick of Pure Reason, sect. 3., Introduction.

then as unable, for want of counter-pressure, not only to move onward himself, but to make the said understanding (the void space) move onward.

Similes managed in this manner may undoubtedly be well spared from philosophical writings, as they have no tendency to make us conceive more vividly or remember better what they are brought to elucidate. In truth the reader rises from them with perplexed if not erroneous impressions. They are both the signs and the causes of confusion. An English author (I may mention by the way) has availed himself of the same natural circumstance as a metaphor with much more felicity. After showing how vain and futile is the attempt to get rid of the exercise of our reasoning faculty, and replace it by anything of higher authority, he proceeds: "In every endeavour to elevate ourselves above reason, we are seeking to rise beyond the atmosphere with wings which cannot soar but by beating the air."*

The evils incident to figurative expressions in philosophical statements and reasoning are acknowledged on all hands. As to the remedy there is not the same consent.

Dugald Stewart, after citing the recommendation of Du Marsais, that figurative language should be wholly excluded from philosophical discussions, and also the comment of D'Alembert upon it that, how-

* The Rationale of Religious Enquiry, by James Martineau, p. 48.

ever desirable it is to banish such language as much as possible, it is impracticable to do it entirely, proceeds to say, that neither of these writers has hit on the only effectual remedy, namely, to vary the metaphors we employ.* Although this expedient might, doubtless, be useful in certain cases, it does not appear to go to the root of the evil, inasmuch as the employment of a metaphor even once might lead to what is chiefly to be avoided—false conclusions. The best expedients seem to me, as I have before suggested, first to make use of those words, as far as we can, which, to borrow the description of them given by Mr. Stewart himself, have "lost their pedigree," or ceased to be metaphorical; and, secondly, following D'Alembert's advice, to be on our guard against allowing metaphorical expressions to pervert our judgments, by becoming, as I apprehend him to mean, the foundation of our inferences. But I must check myself in this kind of rambling comment. I find that I have inadvertently digressed into a dissertation respecting the effect of figurative language in general on philosophical discussions. What my subject led me to show was, the mode in which writers on philosophy, to the detriment of their science, have treated the mental faculties as distinct both from the mind and from each other, and it has been only to guard myself from the possible charge of

* Philosophical Essays. Essay 5. chap. 3.

having mistaken figurative phrases for more than they were intended to convey, and over-estimated their consequences, that I have entered into a consideration of the general tendency of such phrases to misdirect us in psychological inquiries.

Much of the language I have quoted describes the transactions of these faculties as if they were real facts. If it is to be taken as figurative, it must be characterised as sometimes shadowing forth realities with more or less confusion and indistinctness; but, perhaps, still oftener presenting us with metaphors, without any realities underlying them — pure chimeras of the imagination— mere unsubstantial substitutes for knowledge.

One of the worst consequences, indeed, of treating the faculties as distinct entities has manifested itself in the great number of fictitious facts, whether arrayed in a figurative garb or not, which are constantly adduced in the description or statement of mental phenomena, or in theorising to account for them.

This consequence, however, which I have already slightly glanced at, forms too important a feature of the subject to be dismissed with a cursory notice, and I will resume it in a separate Letter.

LETTER V.

IMAGINARY MENTAL TRANSACTIONS.

Amongst the modes in which the practice of erecting the faculties into distinct and independent agents has vitiated the philosophy of the human mind, one of the principal, as I noticed in my last Letter, has been the consequent invention of a great number of imaginary mental transactions. The visionary forces having been brought into the field, there appears to have been an irresistible propensity in metaphysicians to find them employment, by putting them through a variety of evolutions, by which no real advance has been effected. We are continually made spectators of mock fights without any real battle. We are taken to Chobham instead of to Waterloo or to Inkermann.

To drop the metaphor, which stares me in the face as a little inconsistent with my own doctrine, I think it will be found that the practice in question has led philosophers into the very prevalent error of assuming and alleging purely imaginary circumstances in the description and explanation of mental phenomena.

Occasionally these imaginary facts are mixed up

with figurative descriptions of real facts, difficult to be recognised in their metaphorical garb; the whole forming an extraordinary and perplexing exhibition. To common apprehension the science of mind is altogether so unsubstantial and shadowy, that such imaginary circumstances, if plausibly represented, appear to harmonise with positive events of consciousness, and are often received with unhesitating facility.

If you and my other readers will take the trouble of scrutinising philosophical writings with a view to this point, you will be surprised at the extent to which the practice in question has been carried, far beyond what you would conceive from my representation of it.

Nine-tenths of the speculations of transcendental philosophers, as far as they have come under my observation, appear to be made up of absolutely imaginary events.

To make the subject plain, it may be needful to remind you that all the events and facts in the world may be arranged under two heads — mental facts, and physical facts.

In the philosophy of the human mind we have to deal with both, because changes in our physical frame are not only indispensable for the perception of external objects, but are continually producing other variations in the state of our minds; and such variations of intellect or emotion again affect the body, as is obvious in the case of voluntary actions.

When a man, for example, is in a low, sluggish condition of thought and feeling, the application of a stimulating substance to his stomach will enliven both: while, on the other hand, the sudden announcement of calamity may deprive that organ for the moment of its usual vigour, at the same time that it excites the powers of utterance to extraordinary exertion. And so in innumerable other instances. Indeed, there is every reason to conclude that no mental state arises without having been preceded by a physical change in the body, and without itself in turn producing such a change.

Whether, nevertheless, this is true or not, one thing is plain, that mental facts and physical facts, even when there is the clearest dependence of one on the other, are distinct as objects of knowledge.

Mental facts can be gathered only from consciousness, or, more correctly, are states and events of consciousness; and physical facts, being states and events of matter, can be gathered only from external observation.

There is, indeed, one class of facts in which there may be some ambiguity—I mean automatic actions, which, originally the result of distinct willing, seem sometimes to go on from the connexion of one nervous state with another, without any conscious effort on our part, as in playing while absorbed in reverie an often repeated tune on a musical instrument. But even here the motions of the fingers are physical, and are matters of external observa-

tion. The only question is, whether they are severally preceded by mental acts.

Hence, there is a simple inquiry always to be made, in the case of descriptions and explanations of mental phenomena, — are the descriptive or explanatory facts mental or physical? If they are neither, they are of course nonentities — mere creatures of assumption or hypothesis: but even when they are distinctly either one or the other in character as alleged, they may be purely imaginary or fictitious. There is consequently a further inquiry to be made, after determining the class to which they belong; namely, if they are mental, whether they are such as we are inwardly conscious of; if they are physical, whether they are such as can be externally observed.

A rigorous questioning of this sort would show that many celebrated explanations and theories turn altogether on alleged facts of this fictitious or imaginary character.

It is deserving of especial remark how exceedingly prevalent is the assumption of imaginary agents and incidents in explaining what has been termed the philosophy of the senses; in treating of which there is often a mixture, and sometimes a confusion, of mental and physical circumstances. Of this practice I have adduced some glaring instances in my Discourses on Various Subjects, recently published; especially in the Discourse on the Paradoxes of Vision, to which I must take

the liberty of referring you, since to repeat the examples here at length would break the continuity of my present train of thought. I shall content myself with citing from the work one short specimen of this frequent error in treating the phenomena of perception. It is contained in a passage from the pen of no less a philosopher than Sir Isaac Newton, who, in a letter to Briggs, where he is speaking of the pictures on the retina, says, "Those pictures transmit *motional pictures* into the sensorium in the same situation; and by the situation of these motional pictures one to another, the soul judges of the situation of things without." Here the alleged existence of motional pictures, their transmission to the sensorium, and the soul's judging by them of the situation of things without, are plainly not facts which we can externally observe; neither are they facts of which we are conscious; and consequently, according to the rule already given, they must be pronounced fictitious or imaginary.

Newton was on his guard against systematic suppositions in physical science — "*hypotheses non fingo;*" but, not being equally at home in mental philosophy, he was not equally vigilant against those incidental assumptions which, apparently insignificant, insidiously intrude themselves into this department of inquiry, and vitiate our speculations. In regard to such matters he did not certainly rise above the level of his age;

nor could it be reasonably expected that he should.

Several of the passages adduced in a former Letter to exemplify the way in which the faculties are treated as distinct entities, also exemplify the error at present under consideration; into which, as I have already intimated, that mode of handling the subject is almost sure to betray the philosopher who resorts to it. When I read in the pages of Kant, or of his expositors, that "all our cognition begins from the senses, proceeds thence to the understanding, and finishes in reason," I examine whether I am conscious of the two latter events, which are clearly not of a physical character, and I do not find that I am conscious of such an event or operation as knowledge proceeding from the senses to the understanding, nor of the subsequent operation of its finishing in reason.

Described as they are in the passage quoted, such processes appear to me wholly fictitious. What I am conscious of is, that I perceive external objects which is itself as much an act of the understanding, that is, of an intelligent being, as anything can be, and of itself constitutes knowledge; that I afterwards think, or may think, upon such objects; and that I frequently draw conclusions regarding them.

If this were all that Kant intended, the described processes might be vindicated from

the charge of being fictitious; but, in that case, he would be exposed to the sinister compliment of having succeeded in disguising very simple facts in a dress woven by his imagination.

The truth is, that the language of the philosopher of Königsberg, as I have already remarked, is exceedingly figurative; and it is frequently difficult, in following his cumbrous and elaborate sentences, to distinguish what is only imaginative from what is imaginary — that for which there is some foundation in fact, however it may be disguised in expression, from that which is purely fictitious.

Both his fictions and his figures, however, seem to have arisen, in a great measure, from treating the faculties as distinct and independent agents; many of them at least could not have well existed without that misleading method of regarding the subject.

In elucidation of this point read the following extract from his Critick: —

Speaking of Hume, he says, "As he knew no difference between the well-founded pretensions of *the understanding* and the dialectical pretensions of *reason*, against which, however, his attacks are principally directed; reason, whose peculiar action is thereby not in the least disturbed, only impeded, does not thus *feel the space for extending itself closed*, and can never be wholly diverted from its attempts, *although it is hit here and there.* For

it *arms itself* for resistance against attacks, and thereupon *carries its head still so much the higher*, for the purpose of establishing its claims. But a complete estimate of its whole faculty, and the thence arising conviction of the certainty of a small possession, amidst *the vanity of higher pretensions*, does away with all litigation, and engages it to be satisfied with a limited but indisputable property." Only reflect on this as a passage in an author who is avowedly engaged in pouring new light on the philosophy of mind! A more complete personification of reason was never exhibited, even by his successors, and it is obvious that the passage could not possibly have been written by any one who, instead of speaking about a faculty, had concerned himself with the consideration of reasoning as a process. We here learn that reason *feels*, that it is susceptible of being *hit*, that it *arms itself* against attack, *carries its head high* for the purpose of establishing its claims, and is finally satisfied with a limited property amidst the vanity of higher pretensions; not to specify sundry other doings and attributes characteristic of an independent agent. These are, it must be allowed on all hands, highly figurative expressions; but who can tell us what are the real facts meant to be indicated by them? A sharp sight may possibly detect a faint glimmer of meaning in several of the figures, but there can be little hesitation in pronouncing the facts in the

main to be as imaginary as the dress which they wear is imaginative. Such writing bears about the same relation to true mental science, as the Loves of the Triangles to the demonstrations of Euclid: —

> "Alas! that partial science should approve
> The sly rectangle's too licentious love!
> For three bright nymphs the wily wizard burns;—
> Three bright eyed nymphs requite his flame by turns."

It is doing no injustice to Cousin to say that similar remarks are applicable to him. Let us take a specimen of his speculations in proof. "It is reason," he says, "which perceives both itself and the sensibility which envelopes it, and the will which it obliges without constraining."

Now here we have divers imaginary facts. If the reason which hovers about M. Cousin (for the faculty being, as he affirms, impersonal, cannot belong to him or reside within him) really perceives itself, I can only say in my own case that I am not conscious or in any way cognisant of a separate entity called reason, making itself the object of its own observation; nor am I conscious of, or even able to understand, such a phenomenon as sensibility enveloping reason; and I am as little conscious that reason performs the difficult, if not impossible, task of obliging without constraining another power named the will. As they are stated by M. Cousin, all these are the imaginary transactions of imagi-

nary entities, and vanish the moment you try to substitute operations for faculties. Had the sentence here quoted proceeded from an English pen, it would have been at once stigmatised as jargon; nor can I pass a more favourable judgment on such phrases as—"I myself am the instrument with which I know everything:" "c'est moi qui suis l'instrument avec lequel je connois toute chose."*

When, again, he speaks of the *will* being "*the centre* of consciousness, and *reason* its *light*," I am incapable of finding any state of mind in myself answering to these plausible expressions.

It is anything but satisfactory to know that some of our English philosophers have fallen into similar nullities; as, for example, Dr. Reid, in a passage before quoted, where speaking of mankind's irresistible belief in an external world, he says, "if Reason should stomach and fret ever so much at this yoke, she cannot throw it off: if she will not be the servant of Common Sense, she must be her slave."

The prevalence of such imaginary facts in metaphysical writings, indicates that mankind have arrived at about the same stage in mental philosophy as they had in physical science when they talked of the transmutation of the metals, the elixir of life, the influence of the stars on human destiny, the existence of positive levity, nature's horror of a vacuum, and the like.

* Fragmens Philosophiques.

I have already explained the effect of figurative language in misleading us into false conclusions; and this is equally the effect of chimerical facts, whether dressed in a plain or metaphorical garb.

But where they are harmless in this respect,—if such innocuousness is possible,—they all produce, like the physical errors I have named, another and scarcely less extensive evil; they obstruct the progress of science by a false semblance of having solved some proposed question or problem; by which fallacious solution mankind—prone to accept any plausible explanation of their difficulties—are for a time satisfied, and the spirit of inquiry among them is lulled to sleep.

Nor is this all.

The mode of dealing with the subject on which I have here animadverted is especially calculated in these days to banish the philosophy of mind from the attention of all men of sense and science; and thus tends, by different but concurrent means, to keep it at the comparatively low point at which it now stands.

No one, after reading the extracts I have presented to you in the two or three preceding letters, can be surprised to hear of a declaration made by men of eminent abilities, that, after years of study, they had not succeeded in gathering one clear idea from the speculations of Kant. I should have been almost surprised if they had.* "I am endeavour-

* "In or about 1818 or 1819, Lord Grenville, when visiting the lakes of England, observed to Professor Wilson, that,

ing," exclaims Sir James Mackintosh, in the irritation evidently of baffled efforts, "to understand this accursed German Philosophy."

Neither can one greatly wonder that a recent philosopher of high reputation, M. Comte, has attempted to discredit the whole subject, asserting that the pretended direct contemplation of the mind by itself, is a pure illusion. On this point, as I utterly dissent from him, I shall probably have something to say hereafter.

after five years' study of this philosophy [Kant's], he had not gathered from it one clear idea. Wilberforce, about the same time, made the same confession to another friend of my own."—*De Quincey, in Tait's Magazine, June*, 1836.

LETTER VI.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE PHENOMENA OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

If, according to my representation, the mental powers and capacities of man are to be considered as only classified operations, or states of consciousness, you will probably be disposed to ask, what is the classification that I myself adopt?

This is a very reasonable inquiry, which I will endeavour to satisfy; and, indeed, the very course of the exposition I have undertaken requires me to attempt it. But I must remark, at the outset, that classification in this department of knowledge, as in many others, is to a certain extent arbitrary, and that in the present case some of the operations necessarily include or presuppose others. My aim will be to present such an arrangement as, if not complete in itself, will be correct as far as it goes, and will, at all events, enable me to explain with clearness and in definite language, those views of the human mind which I have to unfold.

Hume has well described the task before me, its advantages and its difficulties; although, in saying so, I would not be understood as concurring in

every position he lays down, or every expression he employs.

"It is remarkable," he says, "concerning the operations of the mind, that, though most intimately present to us, yet, whenever they become the object of reflection, they seem involved in obscurity; nor can the eye readily find those lines and boundaries which discriminate and distinguish them. The objects are too fine to remain long in the same aspect or situation; and must be apprehended in an instant by a superior penetration, derived from nature, and improved by habit and reflection. It becomes, therefore, no inconsiderable part of science, barely to know the different operations of the mind, to separate them from each other, to class them under their proper heads, and to correct all that seeming disorder in which they lie involved, when made the object of reflection and inquiry. This task of ordering and distinguishing, which has no merit when performed with regard to external bodies, the objects of our senses, rises in its value when directed towards the operations of the mind, in proportion to the difficulty and labour which we meet with in performing it. And if we can go no further than this mental geography, or delineation of the distinct parts and powers of the mind, it is at least a satisfaction to go so far; and the more obvious this science may appear (and it is by no means obvious), the more contemptible still must

the ignorance of it be esteemed, in all pretenders to learning and philosophy.*

Without further preamble, I will present you with my arrangement, and, for the sake of clearness and easy reference, I will draw it up in the form adopted by naturalists.

CLASS. THE PHENOMENA OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

ORDER 1. SENSITIVE AFFECTIONS.

Genus 1. *Bodily Sensations.* Sensations in the bodily organisation, not attended by, or not comprising, the perceiving of any thing external to the body.

Genus 2. *Mental Emotions.* Emotions without consciousness of any affection of the bodily organisation, or of anything external.

ORDER 2. INTELLECTUAL OPERATIONS.

Genus 1. *Discerning.*

Species 1. Discerning through the Organs of the Senses, or Perceiving.

Species 2. Discerning in all other cases, *i. e.* when the Organs of the Senses are not concerned.

Genus 2. *Having ideas or mental representations, or Conceiving.*

Species 1. Conceiving without individual recognition.

Species 2. Remembering, or conceiving with individual recognition.

* Inquiry concerning the Human Understanding. Sect. 1.

Species 3. Imagining, or having representations in a different order or combination from any in which the originals were discerned.

Genus 3. *Believing.*

Species 1. Believing on evidence.
2. Believing without evidence.

Genus 4. *Reasoning.*

Species 1. Contingent Reasoning.
2. Demonstrative Reasoning.

Order 3. Willing.

Genus 1. *Willing movements of the body.*
2. *Willing operations of the mind.*

I shall immediately show that this classification may be in some respects altered without much, if any, material disadvantage, and I shall afterwards proceed to explain several parts of it which may not at first sight be properly appreciated. I may also remark, that should you or any one else object to the introduction of the terms, class, order, genus, species, these, not being at all essential, may be dispensed with, and the whole arrangement thrown into the form of a simple synoptical table, with the usual modes of separation and ramification.

At the same time, I must confess that, in my judgment, the adoption of the forms used in natural history brings the related operations more distinctly into view, — a point much neglected in many of our popular treatises, in which the faculties are delineated and explained in separate chapters, with

little indication of any connection subsisting amongst the processes described under each head.

Whether you will be able to concur with me or not in the classification I have adopted, is a point, I would observe, not very material to the principal questions which I am about to discuss. They are quite independent of any such arrangement, and it will be sufficient for my design if I succeed in making perfectly clear the acceptations of the various terms contained in it.

I have already mentioned that a different classification might be adopted. As one variety, I give you the following, which comes nearer to the classification of some of my predecessors:—

CLASS. THE PHENOMENA OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

ORDER 1. EXTERNAL OPERATIONS AND AFFECTIONS.

Genus 1. *Perceiving through the Organs of Sense.*
2. *Bodily Sensations.*

ORDER 2. INTERNAL OPERATIONS AND AFFECTIONS.

Genus 1. *Conceiving.*

Species 1. Conceiving without individual recognition.

Species 2. Remembering, or conceiving with individual recognition.

Species 3. Imagining, or conceiving in a varied order.

Genus 2. *Discerning.*
3. *Believing.*

Species 1. Believing on evidence.
2. Believing without evidence.

Genus 4. *Reasoning.*
1. Contingent reasoning.
2. Demonstrative reasoning.

Genus 5. *Emotions.*
6. *Willing.*

Species 1. Willing movements of the body.
2. Willing operations of the mind.

This arrangement may possibly be regarded as the better of the two. My own taste, or rather judgment,—without attaching much importance to the matter,—decidedly, however, prefers the other; in elucidation of which I shall proceed to offer you a few brief comments in my two or three ensuing letters.

LETTER VII.

SENSITIVE AFFECTIONS.

It will be observed that I have placed together in the first order bodily and mental feelings, which I have done because they agree in being *sensitive* affections as contradistinguished from intellectual operations.

An objection may be reasonably made to the terms bodily and mental being thus put in opposition to each other, inasmuch as all feelings are mental, *i. e.* are modes of consciousness; but I have found it impossible to avoid such language (and the same may be said in reference to the epithets external and internal), without either great circumlocution, or resorting to crabbed and repulsive terminology. Bodily sensations in my nomenclature are such as are really felt to be in some part of the body.

You will probably notice with surprise that acts of perception through the organs of the senses are not only separated from bodily sensations, but ranked under the head of intellectual operations; while bodily sensations themselves are placed under the same order as emotions. This point is perhaps the most difficult to deal with in the whole classi-

fication, and requires to be elucidated at some length. My separation of the two kinds of mental phenomena in question is founded on certain facts of consciousness, to which I must beg your especial attention.

1. We have, in the first place, a great variety of sensations which we feel to be in some definite part of the body without perceiving anything external to the organisation. Of this kind are sensations on the skin; as a glow on the cheeks, a prickling on any part of the surface, pulsations, hunger, thirst, morbid indications in the alimentary canal and elsewhere, and a hundred nameless feelings. They may be briefly described as sensations internal to the organisation, and localised, or felt to be in particular parts of it.

2. Through the organs of sense, we perceive objects to be external and different from ourselves, the percipient beings. We touch, see, hear, taste, and smell outward things.

3. We have emotions purely internal, which we feel to be wholly different, on the one hand from our intellectual states or movements, and on the other from our corporeal sensations. I scarcely need mention hope, joy, fear, sorrow, as instances of this kind.

From this brief glance at their respective characteristics, bodily sensation appears to differ so widely from the perception of external objects, that these two sorts of mental phenomena natu-

rally fall, in any arrangement, under different heads; and the former being a kind of feeling, while the latter is a species of discerning, they may be conveniently ranged under the orders to which I have respectively referred them.

On the other hand, bodily sensations and mental emotions are so far allied that they both come within the description of sensitive affections or feelings; and although they may be said to be generically different, these genera may be fairly and advantageously placed under one and the same higher denomination.

The question, however, arises, whether this arrangement would not separate the functions of some of the organs of the senses from those of others.

"We undoubtedly," it may be said, "perceive external objects by the sight and the touch; but is it equally clear that we are conscious of perceiving something external in the mental states of hearing, tasting, and smelling? Are not these more nearly allied to what have been just described as bodily sensations, than to intellectual operations; and are they not in fact internal to our organisation, and originally felt to be so?"

To this I reply, that, as far as I can determine the point from self-observation, we have a consciousness, or more properly a perception, of something external in the exercise of all our organs of sense; in hearing, and tasting, and smelling, as well as in touching and seeing.

The contrary opinion seems partly to arise from the external things perceived in the three last-mentioned cases, being *unextended;* or rather not being perceived to be extended, like the objects of sight and touch: but I think you will discern, on reflection, that there is no ground for limiting the term external object to a substance perceived to be extended. A sound is the object of hearing, a flavour of tasting, and a scent of smelling, as much as a rough or resisting body is an object of touch, or a coloured body of sight; and all these objects are alike perceived to be external, or in other words to be different from the being who perceives them.

This will be still more apparent, if you pause and reflect upon the last expression — that by external we in reality mean something different from ourselves; and surely no one ever feels that the warbling of a nightingale, or the burst of music from an orchestra, are part and parcel of himself, the percipient being. All the notes, from the lowest to the highest, in all their variety and rapidity of change; all the melody and harmony of the song, the concerto, or the overture, are perceived to be as external and independent of the hearer as the visible persons and instruments from which they proceed.

The apparent, or, as I should call it, the perceived externality of sound, is sometimes attributed to association with visible and tangible objects, but, I think, with manifest incorrectness; for, in that

case, hearing would be altogether an internal emotion, and I am myself unacquainted with any mode in which a state of consciousness, originally destitute of any reference to external things, can ever be converted into a consciousness of perceiving such things.

There are doubtless points of similarity between what I have called bodily sensations, and the perceptions we have through these three organs of sense. The functions of the organs of taste and smell resemble bodily sensations in being localised in the organisation, — whether originally, or, as I am inclined to think, from experience, *i. e.* from habitual conjunction with the operations of touch and sight, may be questioned: but so does the function of the organ of touch, which consists indisputably in perceiving external objects, while the function of hearing is, on the other hand, not necessarily felt as taking place in any particular part of the body, — resembling in this respect that of the sight.

From this you will observe that I do not regard the circumstance of some part of the bodily organisation being consciously affected as the characteristic distinction between bodily sensations and acts of perception. The distinction between the two is, that the former do not comprise a consciousness of the presence of anything external to the body, while the discernment of something external is the essential attribute of the latter.

It must not, moreover, be overlooked, that acts of

perception through the organs of hearing, tasting, and smelling, while they are concerned solely with unextended objects, are usually accompanied by pleasure or pain ; and these two circumstances combined tend perhaps, on a first view, to give them the character of bodily sensations.

Having thus explained the reasons for the first order in my arrangement — a business of unavoidably dry and minute distinction and detail — I will postpone the consideration of the second to another Letter.

LETTER VIII.

INTELLECTUAL OPERATIONS. — DISCERNING AND CONCEIVING.

In resuming the consideration of the second order in my proposed arrangement, I must first glance by the way at the fact already referred to, that most of the intellectual operations include and presuppose others. With the exception of perceiving, they can indeed, none of them, be considered as simple or uncombined.

Having representations or conceiving, implies having previously felt or perceived, or some other prior state of consciousness. Discerning, otherwise than through the organs of sense, includes conceiving: and reasoning includes both conceiving and discerning, and one species of it, believing.

In other words, although we may possibly *perceive* through the organs of sense, without any other conscious operation, we cannot *conceive* or have representations, without having previously perceived or felt what is thus represented to us; we cannot *discern* (when the organs of sense are not engaged) without *recalling* or *remembering* something on which our discernment is exercised; and we cannot *reason* without both remembering and

discerning, nor, in regard to contingent matters, without *imagining* and *believing* what we cannot know.

The operation which I have named discerning, and the reasons for so calling it, will require some explanation.

This term, it appears to me, or at least some equivalent general term, is needed to denote not only perception through the organs of sense, but all kinds of perception (if I may use the word for once in its most comprehensive acceptation), whether sensational or intellectual, external or internal, which are in fact frequently blended together.

This will be accomplished by adopting the term *discerning* as the name of the genus, and confining *perceiving* to that species of discernment which takes place through the organs of the senses. If this is done, we may use the word discern in the latter case, either with or without mention of the senses; but when we wish to be at once brief and precise, we shall have recourse to the word perceive.

It frequently happens that our knowledge of a complex fact is the joint result of perceiving and conceiving, or recollecting.

I may observe, for example, that a certain house is a square building, by looking at it on all sides; but I do not perceive it to be square at once by the actual exercise of sight. I walk round it, and look successively at each angle, every one of which I

find to be a right angle, but at the moment of making the last observation, I only *recollect* that the others are right angles. I cannot, therefore, be said to perceive actually by sight that the whole building is square: but if we use the word discern in the sense above-mentioned, the whole process will be embraced, by saying that I discern the house to be square. I learn that it is so by comparing the angle in sight with the angles previously seen — what I perceive with what I recall.

This point will perhaps be still better illustrated by the hypothetical case which follows.

Suppose I am invited to look at the portrait of an eminent statesman whose person was before unknown to me. He is himself standing beside the picture when I enter the room, and from seeing both together, I pronounce it to be an excellent likeness. On another occasion, I visit it with a friend of the statesman in the absence of the original, and my companion, who sees the picture for the first time, agrees with me in adjudging it to be a faithful representation.

In the first case I may be said, with perfect correctness, to perceive the resemblance, as the two objects compared are both in sight; in the second case, my companion cannot be said to perceive, but he may be said to *discern* it, inasmuch as, although he perceives the picture, he only recollects the person represented by it. He compares what he perceives with what he remembers, and the result

is a discernment of the likeness of one to the other. Such nicety of designation, which would be needless, and might appear affected in common discourse, is essential for the accurate description of intellectual processes, and for correct deductions from them.

I will add another illustration. In geometrical reasoning, if I have a diagram before me, I may say either that I perceive the equality of two angles, or that I discern it through the organ of sight, or, making use of the generic term, simply that I discern it; but if I dispense with a diagram, and only conceive the figure, I can no longer say that I perceive the two things to be mutually equal; I must, if I adopt the suggested phraseology, affirm that I discern them to be so; and yet, except in the single point that the sight is exercised in one and not in the other, the two processes are exactly the same.

Philosophers are now, I think, agreed that it is desirable to have a general term exclusively appropriated to designate our cognisance of objects through the organs of the senses; and the word perceiving or perception seems to have better claims to the office than any other.

At the same time, the operation of distinguishing in those cases in which the organs of sense are not in exercise, is often so exactly the same as when they are, and the two species of operation are so perpetually blended together, that it is equally desirable to have a form of expression which may

be applied in common to both; and such a phrase we have in the generic term discerning.

A similar distinction, although in different language, and varying in some other respects, has been made by preceding writers, but it has seldom been rigorously adhered to. Harris, for example, divides perception into two kinds, sensitive and intellective, and if you wish to see how he treats them, you may consult his once celebrated "Inquiry concerning Universal Grammar." *

Before concluding this part of my subject, it may be necessary to notice a common mode of speaking about perception (to which, indeed, I alluded in a former Letter), as if it were an inferior task performed by those drudges, the senses. The author last referred to may be cited in illustration: "When a truth is spoken," he says, "it is heard by our ears, and understood by our minds."

The philosophers who thus speak, evidently regard the senses, as acting indeed independently, but at the same time as only bringing objects before the understanding, which then proceeds to deal with them and subject them to its various processes; while my view of man as a percipient and intelligent being, leads me to consider the act of perceiving through the organs of sense to be as truly an intellectual operation as any other.

* See page 221. of the Works of James Harris, by his son, he Earl of Malmesbury.

With respect to the second genus in my second order, it may be necessary to say that I employ the phrase "having representations or conceiving," with the same, or nearly the same meaning (but a more restricted one), as logicians are accustomed to give to the term "simple apprehension." To conceive an object, to have an idea of it, to think of it, are, in my proposed nomenclature, identical expressions.

Mr. Dugald Stewart has furnished us with a definition in which I concur, except that it speaks of a faculty when I should speak of an operation, and is not sufficiently comprehensive. "By conception I mean," he says, "that power of the mind which enables it to form a notion of an absent object of perception, or of a sensation which it has formerly felt."* I should add, "or of any other former state of mind."

Remembering is conceiving, with the addition of individually recognising the thing conceived. It has, in general, been treated separately from conceiving without recognition, but it is obviously only a kindred species.

* This passage may be noted as a good instance, in addition to the many examples before adduced, of the tautology which results from the common method of talking about faculties instead of acts or operations. It speaks of conception as *a power* of the mind *enabling* it — *i. e.* a *power* of the mind giving it *the power* — to form a notion of an absent object; this cumbrous circumlocution meaning simply that forming a notion of an absent object is termed conception.

When a common name, for example, is used, such as the word *lady*, the image which comes into my mind is perhaps attended with no consciousness of my having seen a corresponding original. When, on the contrary, a proper name is used, as Queen Victoria, I have an idea of her personal appearance, with a consciousness of having seen her at some former time. It is obvious, however, that the two operations have so much in common, one being only something more than the other, that they readily fall under the same genus.

Similar remarks apply to the operation of imagining, a definition of which I may also borrow from Mr. Stewart, taking the same exception as before to some of the phraseology used.

After remarking that "the business of conception is to present us with an exact transcript of what we have felt or perceived," he proceeds: "But we have, moreover, a power of modifying our conceptions by combining the parts of different ones together, so as to form new wholes of our own creation. I shall employ the word *imagination* to express this power." *

You will, perhaps, be surprised that, in my table, there is no place allotted to the Association of Ideas, a mental phenomenon which has made a great figure in numerous treatises.

My reason is, that I look upon that phrase as

* Elements, vol. i. chap. 3.

indicating, not any separate operation of the mind, but the circumstances, as far as they can be assigned, which determine what we conceive, remember, and imagine.

All these last-named operations consisting in ideas or representations coming before the mind, there must of necessity be causes why certain ideas present themselves and not others; and the doctrine of association aims to point out the general circumstances or connections discoverable amongst the ideas or their prototypes, which determine the order in which the ideas accompany or succeed each other, such, *e. g.*, as resemblance or proximity in the objects.

But in all this there are no operations of the mind besides those just enumerated.

It cannot be said that we conceive, remember, and imagine, and have, in addition, a train or combination of associated ideas in our minds. When you think of the bright days of your boyhood, and a thousand animating and affecting incidents are awakened in your recollection; or when you fall into a delightful reverie, in which you picture to yourself visionary scenes of happiness, never, probably, to be realised; your mind is, so to speak, the theatre, in each case, of a procession of remembered and imagined objects and events, or (what is precisely the same) of a train of ideas, the place of every one of which is determined by certain causes; and although the whole of these causes

cannot be assigned, there are some of them which can.

It is just these assignable circumstances which constitute what are sometimes termed principles of association amongst ideas; but they might as truly be termed principles of memory and imagination, or causes that determine the order in which we remember and imagine. The phrases *having associated ideas* on the one hand, and *remembering* or *imagining* on the other, do not describe different phenomena.

It is curious, therefore, to find the association of ideas frequently treated as something distinct from conception, memory, and imagination.

These remarks are not intended to detract from the importance of investigating the general circumstances which determine the concomitance and succession of our ideas (for that is a most interesting part of philosophy), but to show the relation which the subject in question bears to the operations enumerated in my arrangement, and the reasons why association is not specified in it under a distinct head.

LETTER IX.

INTELLECTUAL OPERATIONS CONTINUED.— BELIEVING AND REASONING.

I NEXT come to the operations of believing and reasoning, which, on grounds that will appear in the sequel, I treat together.

The word believing has been very variously and loosely employed. It is frequently used to denote states of consciousness which have already their separate and appropriate appellations. Thus it is sometimes said, "I believe in my own existence, and the existence of an external world, I believe in the facts of nature, the axioms of geometry, the affections of my own mind," as well as "I believe in the testimony of witnesses, or in the evidence of historical documents."

Setting aside this loose application of the term, I propose to confine it, 1st, to the effect, on the mind, of the premises in what is termed probable reasoning, or what I have named contingent reasoning—in a word, the premises in all reasoning but that which is demonstrative; and 2ndly, to the state of *holding true* when that state, far from

being the effect of any premises discerned by the mind, is dissociated from all evidence.

To you and others who have any acquaintance with a work I published some years ago on the Theory of Reasoning, it will not be new to be told that I there show how in every case of contingent reasoning, "the mind is determined to the belief of a fact not witnessed or known; or, in other words, it infers an event or fact which it has not the means of immediately observing. For such inferences," I proceed to say, "one condition is always necessary. The reasoner must have been acquainted with a similar case or similar cases. We are determined to the belief of an unobserved fact by having observed or known a similar fact to have taken place in similar circumstances."

Thus the expressions "being determined by evidence to believe" and "drawing an inference," are in such cases equivalent, or rather they are different descriptions of the same fact; one representing the effect produced by evidence on the mind to which it is exhibited; the other speaking of the mind as passing from the premises to the resulting conclusion. Of these two representations the first is in my opinion the most philosophically exact.

But the question will naturally suggest itself to others as it did to me in arranging my table, "Although these two expressions are equivalent,

as denoting the same process regarded from different points of view, is the state of mind called believing always engendered in this way? are there not other cases in which belief exists where no evidence has been exhibited?"

To this inquiry the answer must be,—undoubtedly there are. Nothing is more common than believing without any evidence at all. Every man who has observed and reflected must be aware that propositions expressive of alleged facts are entertained with full conviction without the mind which entertains them having the slightest knowledge or recollection how it originally came to do so.

It may be disputed, indeed, whether the mental condition last described is entitled to the appellation of believing, the difference between being the result of evidence and the effect of chance or instillation standing out as very important; yet the two states are closely akin; and in familiar discourse they are not usually distinguished, but receive the same designation. A reason why the difference should not be considered as generic, may be found in the fact that it is not uncommon for a man to retain his belief in a conclusion after having forgotten the premises, and even that he ever had any premises before him. I have, therefore, placed these two mental states in the same genus.

If I had left out the second species from my table, I should have omitted a phenomenon of the

human mind which has played an important, and, in many respects, a lamentable part in the history of the world; and I know not that I could have placed it better than in the connection which the common voice has assigned to it. In truth, my only doubt is whether, in my anxiety to bring it into distinct view, I have not erred in making a separate species of it at all.

The reasons which have induced me to limit the word believing in my vocabulary to the acceptations now proposed, will be best explained by an examination of some of the modes in which it is frequently applied.

It is common to speak, for example, of believing in the existence of an external world. Sanctioned as this phraseology is by long custom, and by some of the most distinguished philosophers, I object to it because we have already more appropriate phrases in the word perceiving and its cognate terms. The expression, "I perceive an external object," while it is the simplest form of words we can find, means all that can be signified by the expression, "I believe in the existence of an external object," and, therefore, the latter is at any rate superfluous. But this is not all: such a use of the term belief unsettles that precise signification which this important word would have, if it were rigorously limited to the mental state of holding as true or probable what we cannot or do not directly know: and it also tends to weaken the import of "perception"

as expressive of an ultimate or rather a primary* fact of consciousness.

On similar grounds I object to speaking of belief in the truths of geometry except in the case of those who take them on trust. The first premises in geometry are all simple facts which I discern; and I equally discern every fact in the subsequent deductions.

I do not, therefore, in any accurate sense, believe, I know or discern every truth in the process; and it is this discernment at every step, as I have shown in my "Theory," of the operation, which constitutes demonstrative reasoning.

To apply the phrase belief to such cases is substituting a comparatively weak and what, by the very process of so applying it, becomes a vague term for a stronger and a precise one.

There is another term nearly synonymous with the species of belief which is the result of evidence that ought in my opinion to be strictly limited to conclusions in contingent reasoning; I mean judgment.

By logicians it is employed to denote the act of mind expressed in a proposition.

But a proposition may express merely a perceived fact, as "gold is yellow," "the table is square," "the ground is hard;" or it may express

* Primary in the order of occurrence, ultimate in the order of investigation.

a probable conclusion as "wheat is likely to rise in price;" or a demonstrated truth, as "the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal."

To use the term judgment in this way is diffusing its meaning into a generality worse than useless, making it comprehend the very different phenomena of facts perceived through the organs of sense, contingent conclusions, and demonstrated truths; some of which modes of applying the word would be certainly at variance with common usage as well as philosophically objectionable.

From these considerations I think it desirable to confine the word to the sense in which it is most familiarly employed, namely, that of a conclusion from probable premises. So limited, it would express the effect of evidence on the mind, or an inference in contingent reasoning; but it might with great advantage be separated from these synonyms, and appropriated chiefly if not exclusively to signify a particular class of conclusions, namely, those formed from *conflicting* evidence — the principal function of our courts of law.

There are cases continually happening, I scarcely need say, in which conclusions are drawn from facts all pointing the same way, and consentaneously determining our belief; while, on the contrary, there are others presenting discordant circumstances which require to be collated and compared, viewed and reviewed, and weighed with careful deliberation; and it is in these latter cases that the conclusion which results is most appropriately de-

nominated judgment. In our affluence of terms describing mental phenomena we may well spare it for this peculiar office. There is no need to apply it in any other way.

Although I must refer you for a full account of my views on reasoning to my theory before cited, I think it will not be superfluous to point out here, how the two very different processes of contingent and of demonstrative reasoning are wholly made up, so to speak, of operations already described.

In contingent reasoning, for instance, there is, first, perceiving the particular objects and qualities — the facts in a word — about which we reason; secondly, there is the conception or recollection of the facts so observed; thirdly, there is contemporaneously with these, the discernment of resemblance and difference in the facts; and, fourthly, there is the determination of the mind by the facts to the belief of an unobserved past, contemporary, or future event. Thus the whole process is composed of perceiving, conceiving, discerning, and believing.

In demonstrative reasoning there are the same operations of perceiving, conceiving, and discerning; but, instead of the complementary operation needful to complete the process, being the belief of an unobserved contingent event, it is the discernment of necessary coexisting facts or conditions. Thus there is nothing in reasoning but a combination of intellectual acts which are on other occasions separately performed.

LETTER X.

WILLING.

I NOW approach a very important and a very difficult part of my subject,—the operation of willing; which you will observe I have divided into two genera—willing movements of the body, and willing operations of the mind.

It is needless to describe what willing the movements of the body is. You have only to stretch forth your arm to appreciate it.

When we reflect upon the matter, it appears inexpressibly marvellous that by a simple wish we should be able to set in motion a combination of nerves and muscles, the existence of which we are entirely unconscious of, and to do it with such precision, that exactly what we wish is instantaneously accomplished. If this is wonderful in any case, it is especially so in the process of speaking. Rapidly as an orator may pour forth his words, every syllable uttered is the consequence of an act of willing, and all that is spoken is preceded and accompanied by acts of conceiving, recollecting, imagining, reasoning, and feeling; invariably by some of them, and frequently by all.

A similar rapidity of willing is exhibited in

playing on the violin or pianoforte, or other instruments; and both these cases — both uttering articulate sounds, and playing on musical instruments — often furnish striking instances of voluntary motions passing insensibly into automatic actions, in which willing seems to be superseded by what may be described with probability as the associated action of the nerves and muscles, unattended with consciousness.

On this point some valuable observations will be found in Dr. Hartley.

It would be here out of place to attempt, were the feat possible, to point out the innumerable bodily actions which we can will and perform.

I have mentioned speaking, because not only is it one of the principal, but it has a very important reflex influence on our mental operations, both separately and in conjunction with its silent representative writing. Without these endowments, indeed, man would be as inefficient in speculation as a bird stripped of its wings would be helpless in the atmosphere.

The mere utterance of a thought, by giving it a more definite and distinct existence in our conception, enables us to recall it with greater exactness; and when we have, besides, attained the seemingly simple but all important accomplishment of putting down the words in written characters, the thought becomes associated both with a sound and a visible sign, and these with each other, the

whole frequently forming an indissoluble combination.

We have it *then* in our power to return with perfect certainty, as often as we find occasion, to the precise idea, or collection of ideas, which has previously passed through our minds ; and thus, in our progress in knowledge, we continually push forward the stations from which we set out on fresh acquisitions and new discoveries, without the necessity of always turning back to our original starting-place.

It is, however, to the second genus of willing that I am especially desirous of drawing your attention ; namely, willing, as exhibited in the direction and control of our other mental operations. This is a phenomenon much less easy to seize and describe than the other; yet every one must be sensible that volition exercises some influence over his other mental states, or, in preciser language, that the conscious act called willing has often something to do with determining at the time what the other modifications of his consciousness shall be.

To ascertain and describe the precise character and extent of this control, is a nice and difficult task, particularly as whatever influence has place is almost inseparably and undistinguishably mingled with that of our voluntary bodily actions.

What I have to say on this interesting and highly important subject will be limited, at least for the present, to certain intellectual operations, in which

we can clearly and indisputably trace something intentional, and which may on that account be considered as compound; composed, namely, of discerning and willing.

In carrying out this design, several operations immediately come into view, which I may appear to have hitherto unaccountably overlooked. I allude particularly to attention, abstraction, comparison, classification, and generalisation. These I might have introduced into my Table as constituting a fourth order of mental phenomena, under the head of Mixed Intellectual and Voluntary Operations.* Of the propriety of this, a short explanation will enable you to judge.

Attention, when not the result of strong feeling, as I shall hereafter notice, is only purposely directing our observation or thoughts to a particular subject. If the matter is external, we turn our bodily organs to it, and endeavour to discern all that is offered to our perception. If it is something in regard to which the organs of the senses are not in exercise, something conceived or felt, we purposely dwell upon it, and make it the sub-

* Order 4. Mixed Intellectual and Voluntary Operations:—

Genus 1. *Attention.*
2. *Abstraction.*
3. *Comparison.*
4. *Classification.*
5. *Generalisation.*

ject of imagination or reasoning. In many cases, by strong efforts of volition, our attention is so concentrated upon what we are curious or interested to understand, that all other objects are overlooked.

To this extent our willing indisputably produces a directive effect on our intellectual states; but every one, I suppose, has experienced, like myself, the difficulty of concentrating the thoughts in this way without recourse to muscular efforts and external aids, particularly reading and writing and speaking. Without these or similar expedients, the direct influence which volition exercises over our intellectual movements is unsteady and comparatively inconsequential. The unaided mind seems continually wandering to extraneous subjects.

But we must not, as already intimated, regard attention as always voluntary. Some of the most remarkable instances of the mind being powerfully determined to the contemplation of particular subjects — instances of the most intense and concentrated attention — are involuntary; when, for example, we are labouring under violent passions, such as excessive fear, or hope, or grief, or joy. The man who is seized with vehement terror can attend to nothing but the object of the passion. His whole soul is absorbed — not only involuntarily, but even in direct and violent contrariety to his wishes — by the contemplation of what he dreads.

All emotions have a similar effect, proportioned to the degree of intensity in which they are experienced; an effect, be it observed, that may be consentaneous with volition, but is frequently opposed to it.

Abstraction is nearly allied to the phenomenon just considered. It is, in fact, a species or form of attention, its negative aspect, so to speak.

Much as philosophers have written about this operation, it is really nothing more than leaving some things out of consideration and attending to others; and this we may do on most occasions if we will to do it; particularly with the aid of external instruments — pens and paper, figures and diagrams, and other material appliances.

Perhaps no better illustration of what abstraction is can be furnished than the practice of the accountant in casting-up columns of figures. When, for example, he is engaged with a column containing only three places, he first adds up the units, leaving the tens and hundreds out of consideration; then the tens, leaving the units and hundreds unnoticed; and, lastly, the hundreds, with a similar neglect of the other two.

Or take the geometer, who begins by puzzling the learner about such impossibilities as lines of length without either breadth or thickness, and points denuded of all dimensions; the simple matter being that, in his reasonings about lines, he considers only length, and leaves breadth and

thickness out of account; and in the case of points he leaves out all the three. In both cases, however, what he leaves out of account he cannot possibly leave out of conception.

And in all these instances you will not fail to observe the way in which any purely mental influence of willing is almost always intermixed with that of muscular actions co-operating to produce the desired result, and without which the effect of volition on the states or movements of the intellect would be inconsiderable.

On that sort of abstraction which, according to philosophers, results in the formation of those chimerical entities called abstract ideas, I purpose to offer some remarks in a subsequent Letter, when I shall have explained my views on the subject of mental representations.

In comparison, classification, and generalisation there is a similar desire to perform certain acts, or voluntary attention to certain things, and the voluntary employment of external aids. When two or more objects are presented to us, we necessarily, without any intentional effort, discern some of their resemblances or differences, or both; but we often place them purposely before us to do this: and when we wish to mark the likeness between such objects, we call in the assistance of language by imposing the same name upon each of them.

This imposition of a common name on objects observed to be similar, completes and confirms the

process of classification, already less perfectly accomplished by discerning the resemblance, and is sometimes spoken of as one species of generalisation, which in truth it is.

Forming a general proposition with such common names is, however, the operation to which the latter designation is perhaps more usually applied, and which I intend by placing generalisation in my Table after and separately from classification. In both cases we discern resemblances, and, in consequence of this discernment specially directed upon them, objects and facts fall in our conception into groups, and, following a natural propensity, we purposely mark them by appellations which help us to think about them with greater facility and steadiness, as well as to indicate them on occasion to other persons with clearness and precision.

Attention, abstraction, comparison, classification, and generalisation thus usually, though not always or necessarily, imply the voluntary direction of the mind to certain matters and the aversion of it from others, with the assistance, ordinarily, of corporal acts and material appliances; or, in other words, they are intellectual movements, which may, and perhaps usually do, take place in consequence of our willing them to take place, and are aided in various ways by other voluntary actions.

But then the results of these intellectual movements are themselves independent of willing, as the results of all application of the mind or intel-

lectual movements once begun are. Perceiving, discerning, conceiving, recollecting, believing, reasoning, may all, on certain occasions, take their rise from voluntary efforts, and be aided by them; but what we then perceive, discern, conceive, recollect, believe, and infer, cannot be determined by such efforts, but must depend on the matters brought before us, including our own previous knowledge. We can perceive only what is submitted to our organs of sense; we can discern only such qualities as exist; we can conceive and recollect only what we have before perceived or been conscious of; and we can believe only what we have evidence for, or what has been impressed on our minds without evidence; and we can infer in our reasonings only those conclusions to which the premises in view determine us.

I might make similar observations *mutatis mutandis* in reference to our sensitive affections; but not professing in the present series of Letters to enter at any length on that order of mental phenomena, I must leave the application to your own sagacity.

I cannot conclude, however, without remarking that scarcely any attainment in the philosophy of mind is of greater importance than a clear view of the influence of willing over our intellectual and moral states of mind, and (what is implied in it) a clear view of the limitation of that influence. Some of the worst evils that have ever

afflicted humanity are traceable to enormous mistakes on this point; mistakes which still continue to prevail and do their work of mischief, even in the most civilised communities. But as I have dwelt largely on these topics in former treatises, well known to you at least if not to my other readers, I will now content myself with merely hinting the unappreciated importance ot the subject, and commending it to general attention.

LETTER XI.

THE ALLEGED FACULTIES OF REASON AND UNDERSTANDING.

I MUST not quit the classification of mental phenomena without adverting further to the principal instance of it — to the alleged master-faculty reason. This is universally spoken of in modes already noticed as a power distinct in some way or other from the man himself, as well as from all the other faculties of the human mind.

And it certainly has been strangely and whimsically treated. Sometimes it has been disparaged as poor, weak, fallible, fallen, degraded; sometimes elevated into a sort of universal unembodied power, not human, not belonging personally to the man, something in a word divine: at other times it has been spoken of as an instrument, as a spring or source of moral sentiment, as a light, as a natural revelation.

If any one will take with him the explanation given in a former Letter, that all which the term can really denote is an intellectual operation or plurality of such operations, and will apply it to the passages in which the word is used in any of the

ways pointed out, he will find little difficulty in discerning what real meaning, if any, they contain.

It would be wearisome to enter into more than one or two of these illustrative cases.

Amongst other writers Mr. Dugald Stewart has been at some pains to lay down a precise definition of reason; and I should recommend you to read his chapter on the subject, were it only for the purpose of observing what vagueness and want of precise thinking even in an accomplished philosopher attends the method of dealing with faculties instead of operations.

He defines reason to be that power by which we distinguish truth from falsehood and right from wrong, and by which we are enabled to combine means for the attainment of particular ends.*

Here we have certainly a curious assemblage of functions.

In the first place it is obvious that distinguishing the objects or qualities mentioned is not different from distinguishing objects and qualities of all kinds. We may, for instance, distinguish in propositions not only their being true or false, but their being positive or negative, general or particular, clear or obscure, pertinent or non-pertinent; and in actions, not only their being right, but their being prompt or vigorous, or graceful, or well-timed. If reason is to be confined to distinguishing

* Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, vol. 2. chap. 1.

truth from error, and right from wrong, on what faculty is to be devolved the task of discriminating all these and a thousand other qualities from each other and from their contraries ?

On his own grounds this eloquent and accomplished philosopher must be allowed to be here at fault.

The second part of the definition is scarcely more felicitous than the first. Combining means for the attainment of ends is rather a complicated operation — usually including physical processes and acts of willing; but, in as far as it is intellectual, it is clearly only a particular case of contingent reasoning.

Having had experience of certain effects following certain causes, we infer that if we put like causes into operation we shall produce like effects : but we are continually drawing such inferences whether we ourselves put the causes into operation (in other words combine the means) or see them set in motion by other agency, or observe them spontaneously occurring. In each of those instances the mere act of reasoning is the same.

Thus Mr. Stewart, in his definition, presents only particular cases in which we distinguish qualities and draw conclusions, and reserves the designation of reason for the faculty by which, in his phrase, we perform the operations in these particular cases alone, to the arbitrary exclusion of precisely similar operations in all other cases.

It would be an analogous limitation were any one to confine the term memory to the recollection of what concerns human beings and their actions, excluding all other objects and movements, animate or inanimate, which we are equally in the habit of recalling.

It is, however, the renowned distinction of Kant between the reason and the understanding, which has attracted most attention amongst recent philosophers and which perhaps most strikingly illustrates the evil results of what may be called for shortness the method of faculties. In a former Letter I pointed out the curious imaginary actions which he describes reason as performing; and on further investigation we shall find, if I mistake not, much of what he says regarding this and the contrasted faculty, when brought into comparison, to be in the same strain. After we have carefully laid aside all alleged actions and transactions of which we are utterly unconscious, but which constitute the bulk of his description of the functions attributed to the two powers, we shall readily distinguish the portion of truth which underlies the whole.

In order that these functions may be conveniently compared, I will arrange some of the passages descriptive of them in opposite columns.

THE REASON.

"Reason is the faculty which furnishes the *principles* of cognition *à priori*. Therefore pure reason is that which contains the principles of knowing something absolutely *à priori*."—*The Critick of Pure Reason, English translation, p.* 20.

"We here distinguish reason from it [the understanding] by this, that we would term reason the *faculty of principles*." *p.* 268.

"In cognitions which transcend the sensible world lie the investigations of our reason." *p.* 7.

THE UNDERSTANDING.

"The understanding being brought into action by objects which affect our senses and produce representations, compares, connects, or separates these; and in this way works up the rude matter of sensible impressions into a cognition of objects which is termed experience." *p.* 3.

"The understanding is the faculty of thinking the object of sensible intuition." *p.* 57.

"We explained in the first part of our transcendental logic the understanding as the faculty of rules." *p.* 268.

"The understanding teaches us things in the field of phenomena." *p.* 7.

THE REASON.	THE UNDERSTANDING.
"The conceptions of pure reason are transcendental ideas." *p.* 277.	"The pure conceptions of the understanding are the categories." *p.* 277.
"In our reason both [phenomena and noumena] are comprised together, and the question is, how does reason proceed to bound the understanding relatively to both fields?"	The sensible world contains merely phenomena which are not things in themselves, which (noumena) therefore the understanding must, because of its holding the objects of experience mere phenomena, assume.
Prolegomena, § 59.	*Prolegomena*, § 59.

These, in addition to my former quotations from the Critick of Pure Reason, will probably be considered as sufficient specimens of the distinctions drawn. It is not requisite that I should here repeat at length my objections to such phrases as "reason furnishing the principles of cognition *à priori*"; "reason containing the principles of knowing something absolutely *à priori*"; "cognitions transcending the sensible world"; "the understanding working up the rude matter of sensible impressions;" "the understanding teaching us things in the field of phenomena"; "reason bounding the

understanding"; "the understanding holding phenomena and assuming *noumena* or things in themselves."

Expressions of this kind, as I have before pointed out in similar instances, either assert imaginary events — things of which we are not conscious,— or disguise real events in obscure and circuitous language, for which it is difficult to find a meaning.

It will not be hazarding a great deal to say that so much as is here and in other passages of the same writer ascribed of an actual character to Reason, amounts to this, that we are so constituted as to be able to discern necessarily co-existing facts, and to follow out trains of deduction in which such facts are progressively developed; that we are capable, in a word, of demonstrative reasoning.

What, on the other hand, is ascribed to the Understanding consists in discerning differences and resemblances amongst external phenomena, in forming general propositions accordingly, and in deducing from the phenomena observed other similar phenomena beyond our actual cognisance; which operations are simply comparisons, classifications, generalisations, and what are usually termed probable inferences.

Thus, the distinction between Reason and Understanding as presented by Kant resolves itself, as to everything essential, into the difference between demonstrative and contingent reasoning, as already explained in a preceding Letter.

This view is corroborated by the underquoted passage from Coleridge, who was fond of dwelling on the distinction; and in various works has lavished upon it expositions and illustrations which tend to complicate a subject in itself sufficiently simple.

On account of the prolixity of the passage, which you will excuse for the sake of its appropriateness, I must relegate it to the position of a note.* It is

* "Every man must feel," he says, "that though he may not be exerting different faculties, he is exerting his faculties in a different way, when in one instance he begins with some one self-evident truth (that the radii of a circle, for instance, are all equal), and in consequence of this being true sees at once without any actual experience, that some other thing must be true likewise, and that this being true, some *third* thing must be equally true, and so on till he comes, we will say, to the properties of the lever considered as the spoke of a circle; which is capable of having all its marvellous powers demonstrated even to a savage who had never seen a lever, and without supposing any other previous knowledge in his mind but this one, that there is a conceivable figure, all possible lines from the middle to the circumference of which are of the same length: or, when, in the second instance, he brings together the facts of experience, each of which has its own separate value, neither increased nor diminished by the truth of any other fact which may have preceded it; and making these several facts bear upon some particular project, and finding some in favour of it, and some against it, determines for or against the project, according as one or the other class of facts preponderate: as, for instance, whether it would be better to plant a particular spot of ground with larch, or with Scotch fir, or with oak in preference to either. Surely every man will acknowledge, that his mind was very differently employed in the first case from what it was in the second; and all men have

not without value as clearly explaining an important distinction, although some of the expressions are exceptionable.

To this resolution of reason and understanding, as set forth in the writings of some preceding philosophers, into the operations of demonstrative and contingent reasoning, I will add a few words on the strange metaphysical crotchet which asserts the impersonality of Reason. If, giving up the misleading language about faculties, we confine ourselves to intellectual operations, the dogma of impersonality has no longer any ground to rest

agreed to call the results of the first class the truths of *science*, such as not only are true, but which it is impossible to conceive otherwise: while the results of the second class are called *facts* or things of *experience:* and as to these latter we must often content ourselves with the greater *probability*, that they are so, or so, rather than otherwise — nay, even when we have no doubt that they are so in the particular case, we never presume to assert that they must continue so always, and under all circumstances. On the contrary, our conclusions depend altother on contingent *circumstances*. Now when the mind is employed, as in the first case mentioned, I call it *Reasoning* or the use of the pure Reason; but, in the second case, the *Understanding* or Prudence."—*The Friend*, vol. I. p. 271.

On this passage I would remark, that on grounds for which I beg to send you again to my Theory already referred to, the process of inferring probable events is as much entitled in common speech to the name of reasoning, as is mathematical demonstration; nor can it be deprived of the designation without subverting the whole structure of language: and in regard to the word understanding, if it be retained at all in writings that aim at philosophical precision, it should be employed in Locke's acceptation to denote the whole compass of the intellectual operations of man.

upon, it necessarily vanishes with the faculty to which that attribute is ascribed. But, even on the theory of faculties, the doctrine cannot sustain itself. That a certain conclusion is come to, or a certain truth discerned, by every intelligent being who is cognisant of the premises or the facts, no more makes the faculty of drawing the conclusion or discerning the truth impersonal — *i. e.* alien from the individual who deduces the inference or exercises the discernment, — than the circumstance of every person with a nose smelling the fragrance of musk or lavender elevates that distinguished feature into an impersonal organ of sense, and removes it out of the category of private possessions.

Nor does the fact of the operations attributed to Reason being independent of volition (which is a great argument with M. Cousin) at all alter the case. It is a mere arbitrary if not an unmeaning assertion, that *the Will is alone the person — the ego;* and, consequently, proving a thing to be involuntary does not prove it to be impersonal. An act of discerning, a bodily pain, an emotion of joy, are all as independent of volition as a process of reasoning can be; and should therefore, on the same ground, be excluded from being personal to the sensitive and intellectual being; who would then indeed be neither sensitive nor intellectual, but an automaton simply capable of voluntary action. All his feelings and intellectual acts would be felt and done by

something not himself, and consequently would *not* be his.

Further, I question whether any one can attach a clear positive meaning to the phrase impersonality of Reason. Were the faculty in any conceivable sense an impersonal entity, we certainly should have no means of becoming acquainted with it. We could not of course discern an intellectual faculty through the organs of sense, and we could not be internally conscious of a faculty not belonging to us. In what way, then, could it possibly come to our knowledge?

LETTER XII.

THE AMBIGUITY OF CERTAIN TERMS.

My present Epistle you will please to regard as forming a sort of parenthesis.

The view which I have taken in the preceding Letters of the operations and affections of the mind, if it have no other value, will enable me, as I before remarked, to speak of them with a considerable degree of precision.

With the same design of attaining and assisting others to attain precision of language, I purpose in my present Letter to call your attention to an important ambiguity, if I may so denominate it, to which some of the expressions employed both by myself and others in the designation and description of mental phenomena are liable.

What I allude to is well exemplified in the double use (almost unavoidable) of the term perception, and the occasional confusion and false inferences thence arising.

This is a species of relative term which designates what for want of a better name may be described as a double, or compound, or two-sided, but yet indivisible fact. Just as a leaf or piece of paper must

have two sides that may be separately viewed but cannot be disjoined, so there are some facts which consist of two parts equally inseparable in reality although distinguishable in description. Should this statement strike you as not very clear, a brief explanation may, I hope, elucidate it.

It is plain that there can be no perception without both a percipient being and an object perceived; and, conversely, there can be no object perceived without a percipient being. Both the act of the percipient being, and the object which he perceives, are expressed or implied in the word perception, forming essential and inseparable parts of its meaning; and this leads to the use of the term in two modes, according to the part or side of the phenomenon which happens to be principally contemplated at the time or is most prominently in view. When our attention is directed to the percipient being, we employ the term perception to denote his *act*, coupling it probably with the mention of the object, as, for instance, in the sentence, "his perception of the scene was momentary," in which connexion the word is equivalent to the active participle perceiving.

When our attention, on the other hand, is chiefly directed to the object perceived, we frequently designate the latter by the same term, particularly when the word is used with the indefinite article or in the plural number. We are constantly speaking of our "perceptions" when we intend simply

the objects perceived, as in the expression, "our recollections, or conceptions, are copies of our perceptions," meaning copies of what we have perceived, not of our acts of perceiving, although the latter are necessarily implied — copies, in fact, of external objects.

Now, although the term should in rigour be restricted to the act or state of the mind, yet it may, without inconsistency and confusion, be employed in this latter way to designate external objects in contraposition to recollections, or conceptions, or, as I should prefer calling them, representative ideas, or simply ideas.

But there are two other modes of using it, which are not equally harmless; one of them being self-inconsistent, and the other being confused.

The self-inconsistent mode is when in the same argument the word is employed first to denote the mental *act* and then the *objects* of the act, as in the reasoning that because perception is an operation purely mental, therefore, all our perceptions — meaning the objects perceived — are mental; or, putting the conclusion in still stronger language, therefore the objects perceived have no existence but in the mind.

The confused mode is when the term is employed so as really to imply (often undesignedly) something distinct on the one hand from the act of the percipient being, and on the other from the object perceived, as when it is said that our perceptions are like or unlike external objects.

Here the term cannot be applied to our acts of perceiving, for no one would think of affirming our acts of perceiving to be like or unlike the objects perceived; nor can it be applied to the objects perceived, for that would be pronouncing the said objects to be like or unlike themselves. What, then, is the phrase "perception" here intended to designate? It is not the act, it cannot be the object. Where, then, are we to look for the *tertium quid* which is to give to the proposition the reality or even the semblance of a meaning? Or how is it that such a comparison has ever been made, and such a resemblance or non-resemblance predicated?

In a subsequent Letter I shall find a fitting place for an attempt to solve the problem, leaving it in the mean time as an exercise for your metaphysical sagacity.

The acceptation of the word before us becomes still more unsteady with those philosophers who speak of faculties and powers. It is apt in their writings to have a triple meaning, in some places denoting the faculty of perception, in others the act of perceiving, and in others the objects perceived. And in addition to these acceptations I may mention the very objectionable practice of some writers (Hume for instance) who speak of perceptions when they mean conceptions or ideas*, naturally, to be sure, on their theories.

* "Nothing can ever be present to the mind but an image or perception."—*Academical or Sceptical Philosophy.*

This remark leads me to notice that with the word *conception* there is not the same liability to error from ambiguity as with the word *perception;* or, to express myself more precisely, while the latter may be used, as just mentioned, in three senses, the former can be used only in two.

In a passage which I quoted in a former Letter, Dugald Stewart furnishes an instance in point. "The business of *conception*," he remarks, "is to present us with an exact transcript of what we have felt or perceived," meaning of course that it is the business of the *faculty* so called.

He adds: "But we have, moreover, a power of modifying *our conceptions*, by combining the parts of different ones together, so as to form new wholes of our own creation;" in which passage he manifestly intends to designate, not the faculty itself, but the transcripts which, according to him, it is the business of the faculty to present.

Thus we may speak of the faculty of conception, and of the products or acts of that faculty —conceptions; but there is not, as in the case of perception, a separate object which can be confounded with the act under one name. We do, indeed, speak of the objects conceived or recollected; but it is manifest that these objects, not being actually in presence, bear to the act of conceiving them a very different relation from that which objects actually perceived bear to the act of perception.

In strictness there is implied in the term conception nothing but the act itself; there must, indeed, have been previously an object discerned, but at the actual moment there is none: it is *then*, in itself, an absolute unconnected state of mind.

From this it follows that, although in the use of *perceptions* for objects perceived, we must be on our guard against confounding acts and objects in our inferences, against ascribing to one what is true only of the other, yet a similar caution is not required with the word *conceptions*, the employment of which can lead to no such confusion. As, nevertheless, when conception is not used to designate a faculty, it is equivalent to idea, and interchangeable with it, I consider the latter term, in virtue of its not being applicable to either faculty or object, to be preferable to the former, and shall accordingly make a freer use of it in the sequel; for, notwithstanding the loose and indeterminate manner in which it has been frequently employed, I think it may be easily limited to a perfectly definite acceptation.

There are other names designating operations of the mind, such as recollection, judgment, belief, cognition, to which some of the preceding remarks, *mutatis mutandis*, are applicable; but I need not trouble you with bringing them into consideration at present—they may possibly rise to the surface hereafter.

LETTER XIII.

THEORIES OF PERCEPTION.

In glancing over my Table of mental operations and affections, you will perceive that there is ample room for comment and disquisition, besides the explanations I have already offered.

Agreeably, nevertheless, to what I said in my introductory Letter, that it was not my purpose to construct a system embracing an investigation of all the phenomena of mind, but to limit myself as much as possible to such of them as I thought I could elucidate by new considerations, or by putting old facts and arguments into a more definite and forcible shape,—I shall select for discussion, in the sequel, what may be regarded as the principal questions connected with the operations of perceiving and conceiving, without, however, excluding other topics that may incidentally arise.

Lest this should appear a rather narrow field to range in, I would call your attention to the fact, that I have in former works already treated at some length the important processes of believing and reasoning, and if I were to introduce them

here I should be only repeating what I have before advanced.

I may also remark, that the parts of mental philosophy which I have selected for particular consideration in the Letters which are to follow, embrace some of the profoundest problems that have ever been discussed.

After this preamble I proceed to the business before me.

It is singular, and at first sight unaccountable, how it should ever have been propounded, that in the act of perception, as, for example, in looking at a tree, there is an independent image, form, or phantasm, or idea of the tree interposed between the tree itself and the percipient being.

A man has only to look at any object before him, not contenting himself with words, to be satisfied of the non-existence of any such image or idea. To one of untutored and unperverted mind the very suggestion of such a thing would appear absurd. He perceives the external object, and, let him look as intently as he may, he can perceive nothing else.

Philosophers, however, were not content with simple facts, and a simple statement of these facts.

Amongst other conceits, divers of them appear to have entertained a notion that some such intervenient image or phantasm is requisite for the unmeaning reason, that the immaterial mind cannot come into contact with matter, or have any

communication with it, except, as several of these philosophers suppose, through a fine, filmy, shadowy, unsubstantial medium, overlooking that it is the business of philosophy at all times to take facts as they are, to regard what is done; not to perplex itself with hypothetical impossibilities. What mind can do, and what matter can do, must be determined by dry facts. The best proof of the practicability of a thing is, that it takes place.

They might have known, by merely opening their eyes, that intelligent beings *do* see material objects, and that in this simple act they are utterly unconscious of any image, species, idea, representation, or whatever else a metaphysician might choose to call that imaginary entity.

Even philosophers who did not consider any independent entity of this kind to exist, held the kindred doctrine, that there is a purely mental phenomenon, which is the immediate thing perceived, either constituting the object itself, or intervening in some inexplicable way between the external object and the percipient being, so as practically to prevent him from getting at the object, or to keep it aloof from him; an hypothesis, in whatever way it may be put or expressed, that embodies as rank a fiction as the other.

It seems to have been only after a thousand struggles that the simple truth was arrived at, which is not by any means yet universally received the truth that the perception of external things

through the organs of sense is a direct mental act or phenomenon of consciousness not susceptible of being resolved into anything else.

This notion that we do not perceive external objects themselves, but only the ideas of them, whether such ideas are to be regarded as modifications of consciousness, or as substantially distinct on the one hand from the percipient mind, and on the other from the external object, led philosophers into inevitable self-contradictions.

Locke, for example, in one part of his immortal Essay, is inconsistent enough to maintain that we perceive nothing but our own ideas, and yet that we have a knowledge of external objects, although he is evidently puzzled to explain how this can be. And well he might be puzzled. The doctrine which admits that we have a knowledge of external objects, yet at the same time maintains that we perceive only the ideas of such objects, not the objects themselves, is self-contradictory.

In order that we may be able to know what an idea is as a relative or representative phenomenon, we must know also what it relates to or represents, or, in other words, we must know also its correlative; just as to know what a son or a daughter is, we must know likewise what a parent is.

But if, according to the doctrine under review, we perceive only ideas, we are shut out from the possibility of knowing what the represented objects are; nay, even from the possibility of knowing that

such things as represented objects exist: no way is open by which the faintest suspicion of their existence could have access to us. We cannot, therefore, both know external objects, and yet perceive nothing but ideas. The two things are incompatible.

To escape from this contradiction, those who contend that we perceive only our own ideas, must admit that we have no knowledge of external objects: the term idea must be taken to denote something which is not relative or representative, something absolute or independent: it cannot signify a phenomenon or entity representing another phenomenon or entity called an external object. It becomes a positive term without reference to anything else, denoting the thing alone which is perceived: and thus all that the doctrine effects is the virtual re-introduction, under the name of ideas, of the things called external objects, ostensibly banished by it.

The whole is, in fact, however little it may be intended, a mere verbal quibble, stripping the word idea of its representative import, and then substituting it for external object, to which it thus becomes a bad, because an ambiguous, equivalent.

Locke, who was doubtless the last man in the world intentionally to quibble*, braved the

* In the opening of one of Mr. Stewart's Chapters, he is, however, plainly charged with this offence. The passage runs

inconsistency here pointed out, or rather was not adequately sensible of it. I have ventured to say that he puzzled himself on this particular matter, and I ought not to leave so heavy a charge against so distinguished a philosopher without the requisite proof; but as the evidence in support of it will occupy some space, I will reserve the subject for a separate letter.

as follows :—"Mr. Locke's quibbles founded on the word *innate* were early remarked by Lord Shaftesbury."—Phil. Essays, p. 104.

LETTER XIV.

THEORIES OF PERCEPTION. — LOCKE.

LOCKE's perplexity on the point adverted to in my last letter is remarkable.

After telling us that the mind perceives nothing but its own ideas; that it knows not things immediately, but only by the intervention of the ideas it has of them; and yet that there are external things with which some of these ideas agree; he proceeds to say, that ideas are to be distinguished as they are *in our minds*, and as they are *modifications of matter*. But here is at once a difficulty. For him to treat ideas as modifications of matter would obviously never do.

It appears to have immediately struck him that he could not consistently speak of ideas, as being in things themselves; he therefore requests when he so speaks, to be understood as meaning *qualities in the objects* * (thus, by the way, virtually giving

* How necessary this request on his part was may be seen in such passages as the following: — "That which produces any simple or complex idea we denote by the general name cause; and that which is produced, effect. Thus, finding that in that substance which we call wax, *fluidity, which is a simple idea that was not in it before*, is constantly produced by the application of a certain degree of heat, we call the simple idea

up his pre-declared doctrine). Proceeding then with his subject, we may, he says, *observe*, that primary qualities produce in us simple ideas, and that such ideas resemble the said primary qualities.

In the whole of this curious exposition he appears not to have been at all aware how constantly he is assuming that we have some method of knowing objects and their qualities independently of the ideas they engender in us, some other way than (as he expresses it) through the intervention of ideas to which he professedly restricts us: else how (let me ask) would it be possible for us, as he avers, to *observe* primary qualities producing in us simple ideas? and further (what still more glaringly implies a knowledge of both), that these qualities and ideas resemble each other?

Occasionally, however, as if he had some misgiving as to our *observing* this resemblance, he modifies his expressions, and speaks in one place of our only *supposing* that ideas are taken from their archetypes.

Still he makes an attempt to explain the mode in which we come at the resemblance, and in pursuance of it he boldly puts the question, "How shall the mind, when it perceives nothing but its own ideas, know that they agree with things themselves? — a question, baffling enough on his own principles, which he answers not by indicating

of heat, in relation to fluidity in wax, the cause of it, and fluidity the effect."—Book 2. chap. 26.

another channel of information, but by arguing that since the mind cannot make to itself simple ideas, they must necessarily be the product of things operating on the mind in a natural way, and so carry with them all the conformity which is intended.

In this argument, it will be at once noted that his reasoning is, because ideas are not produced in one way, therefore they must of necessity be produced in the specific way he describes; which is plainly anything but a necessary consequence, as was afterwards shown by the speculations of Berkeley, who, in precisely the same case, discards "things operating on the mind in a natural way," and infers that ideas are imprinted by God.

That ideas are not made by the mind, might, if true, help us to the inference that they have some other origin, but not to any conclusion as to the character of their origin.

Without, however, insisting more on this *non sequitur*, and the easy way in which he slips in along with it "all the conformity intended," it is sufficient for me to point out that, in the argument commented upon, he takes for granted the fact of external things existing to operate on the mind; which fact, as I have already pointed out, he is debarred, as a logical consequence of his own doctrine, from either knowing or inferring; and he is of course equally debarred from knowing whether these, to him, imperceptible things, agree or disagree with ideas. Rigorously judged by his own

theory, he must be pronounced to be, in this passage, referring ideas to a source of which he cannot know the existence, and comparing them with entities impossible to be discovered or conceived.

In instituting such a comparison at all, he inevitably involves himself in self-contradiction; and the remark will apply to all other theorists who interpose any entity or any state or step of consciousness, under whatever name it may be couched, between the percipient being, and the external object. Whenever they make a comparison, or predicate a resemblance between such an entity (whether denominated idea or anything else) and an object, they expose themselves to the comment, that according to their system there can be no object to be compared: on their theory, they can know only one thing—what, in their own phraseology, is a representative phenomenon, although it can represent nothing.

But not only is it true that no comparison holds on any such theory as that of Locke's, but that no comparison holds on the contrary and correct doctrine of the direct perception of external objects. Yet how frequently do we hear it asserted by philosophers who maintain the latter, that "our perceptions are like external objects!"

It is only through a confusion of thought and language that a comparison of this sort can have been explicitly made or virtually implied, and the fallacy involved may probably be attributed to

that ambiguity adhering to certain terms which I formerly pointed out.

Putting out of sight one part of the compound fact of perceiving which includes both act and object, by calling the former, in some particular instance, *a perception*, and thus unconsciously transmuting, in their own imagination, the act into an independent entity, they obtain the *tertium quid* which I proposed as a problem in a foregoing Letter, and proceed to speak of a comparison between the imaginary entity so created and the external object; whereas there can evidently be no actual comparison instituted, because there is only one possible thing in view of the percipient being; there are not two things before the mind to be compared. In the case of having the perception of a tree, for example, or, in simpler language, seeing a tree, there is only one object, namely the tree seen. The other part of the process is the act of seeing by a spectator; and it is clear that this act or state called seeing the tree, cannot (without puerility at least) be compared with the tree itself: to speak technically, they are things disparate. You might as well bring into comparison the act of standing and the ground stood upon, and gravely raise the question whether they have or have not any resemblance to each other. Thus, on Locke's theory, consistently carried out, no comparison in the case of the tree is possible, because there is in view of the mind only *an idea:* on the true doctrine of

direct perception, none is possible, because there is only *an object*.

It is scarcely needful to remark, that the same observations which apply to the asserted comparison and resemblance between perceptions and primary qualities equally show the futility of any comparison between perceptions and secondary qualities.

Although there can thus be no comparison rationally instituted, and no resemblance predicated, between the mental act of perceiving and the external object perceived, between seeing the tree and the tree itself; or, as it is more loosely expressed, between the perception and the object; yet there *is* a comparison to be made and a resemblance discerned between another mental act or phenomenon and the external object. My *idea* of the tree when I no longer see it, must necessarily resemble the tree: the former must bear the same relation of similitude to the latter that a portrait bears to the original In so far as it does not, it is not an idea of the object; to that extent it is not a copy, but a mis-copy.

The only legitimate question, then, that can arise as to the resemblance of what is internal to what is external is, whether *ideas*, in their proper sense, are like *objects;* and this answers itself, inasmuch as the very meaning of idea (indisputably in this connection at least) is the mental representation of an object formerly perceived.

The case before us signally shows the necessity of rigorously distinguishing in thought and language between the acts or states of *perceiving* and of *conceiving*.

The gratuitous assumption or groundless statement of Locke's, that we perceive nothing but our own ideas, would never have been made, nor the fallacies flowing from it committed, had it not been for the fundamental error in the method of treating his subject which pervades his profound Essay, and which may be succinctly described to be, not keeping distinct, in thought and language, the two essentially different operations of perceiving and conceiving; and, as a part of this error, not appropriating certain terms, such as representations and ideas, exclusively to acts of conception in the absence of the objects.

With him all these terms are professedly synonymous, and indiscriminately employed.

"Having ideas and perception," he says, in one place, "are the same thing." In another, "Whatsoever the mind perceives in itself, or is the immediate object of perception, thought, or understanding, that I call idea."

Hobbes, and others before him, had shown a similar want of discrimination.

Hence it is no wonder that, as a comparison may be made and a resemblance predicated between ideas in their proper or restricted sense and external objects, these processes should be extended

to any other of the heterogeneous phenomena ranked by the Essay on Human Understanding under the same denomination.

If instead of this verbal generalisation, or rather metaphysical jumble, Locke had steadily and consistently appropriated some term to denote discerning objects through the organs of the senses (*e. g.* the word perceiving), and had kept it uniformly distinct from any terms employed to designate conceiving objects in their absence (*e. g.* having ideas or representations), his great work, admirable in the main for its sound sense, largeness of view, and profound thought, would have been exempt from some of its weakest passages, and amongst the rest from much of the perplexed speculation which I have just pointed out.*

Whether the terms here suggested are the best that could be chosen for the purpose of this discrimination, is open to question; but that some separate appellations should be employed to accomplish the same end, and should be rigorously adhered to, very few metaphysicians will probably doubt.

A similar confusion to that here pointed out pervades German philosophy, as far as I have examined it.

In his doctrine respecting the perception of

* He would never, for example, have talked of the simple *idea of fluidity*, which was not in the wax before, being constantly produced in it by the application of heat.

ideas our great English philosopher is in the main followed by Kant, and divers of his countrymen, as I purpose to show hereafter. It is sufficient to mention here their unhesitating and gratuitous assertion that all which we perceive are representations, and that we can never attain to the knowledge of real objects; in the statement of which doctrine it is to be lamented that the English writers who adopt it pervert the excellent word representation from its legitimate meaning, and make it bear the weight of a false assumption. But before entering on the consideration of these philosophical aberrations, I must turn my attention to the prior subtleties of Berkeley, whose theory on this subject is by far the most celebrated of all. In explaining it, as in almost all his speculations, he exhibits a strange mixture of hasty inconsideration in laying down his premises, with great acumen and specious adroitness in drawing his conclusions. He is excelled by few in the art of erecting ingenious and imposing structures on sandy foundations.

LETTER XV.

THEORIES OF PERCEPTION. — BERKELEY.

Berkeley, in his celebrated speculations on this subject, differs from the doctrine of Locke, animadverted upon in my last letter, since, while he concurs with it in asserting that we perceive nothing but ideas, he maintains that there are no external objects at the back (so to speak) of the ideas: in other words, he regards these ideas as in no way representing independent material entities, but being themselves all that we discern and all that actually have place or exist; and he thus avoids the inconsistency I have pointed out in his illustrious predecessor.

But this, so far, is, as I have already said, merely substituting the name idea for external objects, and really leaves the question in its original state with the disadvantage of exchanging a precise for what becomes after such a process an ambiguous term.

Berkeley, however, overlooked or was blind to this — for which oversight he had in truth abundant precedents — and went on speculating as if he thought that by giving to objects the name of

ideas (a term applied both by himself and others to purely mental phenomena of a representative character) he transmuted the first into the second; that by marking both with the same sign he effected an identification of nature in the things signified.

Quietly assuming this complete identity of nature, he proceeds very logically to argue that objects being ideas and ideas being mental phenomena, they cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them, nor have any existence when not perceived — a conclusion perfectly just in substance, although objectionable in expression, if the term idea is taken in its purely representative meaning, but false if that term is taken as including or signifying objects.

In the last chapter of my Theory of Reasoning I have pointed out how frequently the doctrines of philosophers owe their extravagant results to some error in the very outset of their speculations, and that this is exemplified in Berkeley's specious but utterly unsound theory of vision. It is no less exemplified in his doctrine on the present subject. The stumble from which he never recovers is made in the first sentence of his "Treatise on Human Knowledge." "It is evident," he says, "to any one who takes a survey of the *objects* of human knowledge that they are either *ideas* actually imprinted on the senses, or else such as are perceived by attending to the passions and opera-

tions of the mind; or lastly, ideas formed by the help of memory and imagination, either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways." Never surely were phenomena requiring to be nicely discriminated so unscientifically jumbled together in the compass of one short sentence.

1. He calls objects perceived through our organs of sense "ideas imprinted on the senses" — an alleged operation which I reserve for future comment; thus at once assuming the identity of external objects and ideas, or rather getting quit of all that is peculiar in the former by giving them a name applied to other essentially distinct phenomena of a purely mental character.

2. He speaks of the passions and operations of the mind as *ideas* perceived by attending to them, which is another instance of the confusion of things and perversion of language, inasmuch as although they are mental phenomena, and subsequently give rise to ideas, they are not ideas, but simply what he begins by calling them — passions and operations of the mind.

3. He proceeds to designate by the same term what in my view should alone be designated by it, or have some other distinctive appellation, namely, representative ideas, or such as are formed (to use his own words) "by help of memory and imagination, either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the afore-

said ways." Thus following in the footsteps of Locke, he confounds under the common name of ideas the objects which we originally perceive, and also the mental states of which we are originally conscious, with the recollections or representative conceptions of what we formerly perceived, and what we were formerly conscious of.

Mark his language in another passage: —

"It is an opinion strangely prevailing amongst men, that houses, mountains, rivers, and in a word all sensible *objects*, have an existence natural or real, distinct from their being perceived by the understanding. But with how great an assurance and acquiescence soever this principle may be entertained in the world; yet whoever shall find in his heart to call it in question, may, if I mistake not, perceive it to involve a manifest contradiction. For what are the forementioned *objects* but the things we perceive by sense, and what do we perceive besides our own *ideas* and *sensations;* and is it not plainly repugnant that any one of these, or any combination of them, should exist unperceived?"

Here he first presents objects to our notice — houses, and mountains, and rivers; but as it would scarcely do to ask whether it is not plainly repugnant that these *objects* should exist unperceived, he adroitly substitutes the term *ideas*, thus giving his question the only plausibility it possesses.

He could scarcely expect (at least so early in

the discussion) his readers to concur with him in discerning any plain contradiction or repugnance in the unperceived existence of a mountain: he felt that he must first turn the mountain into an idea.

His whole theory is thus manifestly founded on the fallacy of imposing the name idea on objects perceived through the organs of sense, and then treating them as if a change of name were a change of nature, thus tacitly assuming at the outset the very point which he ought to have applied himself to prove, the only point indeed which he had to prove, the conclusion which should have been the result of his whole argument. If any one choose to indulge in the oddity of calling objects by the name of ideas, he should distinguish ideas into two classes, representative and non-representative, and, however the innovation might be objected to on the score of convenience and taste, it would, if consistently kept in view, lead to no false theories. But it is not allowable to confound the two essentially distinct things under one appellation and then forthwith to draw conclusions with regard to what, if termed ideas at all, ought to be termed non-representative ideas, which are true only of representative ideas.

It is just this fallacy of confusion into which Berkeley fell, and which underlies his theory. Although himself obliged in the course of his speculations to make a similar distinction amongst ideas, he con-

founded them together in his inferences: *i. e.* he drew inferences respecting one kind of the ideas in his nomenclature which could be correctly drawn only of the other. "The ideas," he says, "imprinted on the senses by the Author of Nature are called *real things;* and those excited in the imagination, being less regular, vivid, and constant, *are more properly termed ideas or images of things*, which they copy and represent. But then our *sensations*, be they never so vivid and distinct, are nevertheless *ideas;* that is, they exist in the mind, or are perceived by it, as truly as the ideas of its own framing. The ideas of sense are allowed to have more reality in them; that is, to be more strong, orderly, and coherent, than the creatures of the mind. They are also less dependent on the spirit, or thinking substance which perceives them, in that they are excited by the will of another and more powerful spirit; yet *still they are ideas;* and certainly no idea, whether faint or strong, can exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving it." *

To any one who closely examines it, the course of argument in this passage, seriously as it is meant, really reaches the amusing, although in saying so I may be accused of attempting to "*vanquish Berkeley with a grin.*"† The writer of it recognises, it will be observed, two distinct classes of ideas; the first class passing under the name of *real things*, and the second more properly, as he confesses,

* Principles, sect. 33. † Pope.

under that of *ideas*, being copies or representations of the first class: but still the first class, although called real things (an appellation which, it is to be noted, he dexterously softens into *sensations*), are ideas after all; and as the second, or representative ideas, are allowed on all hands to exist only in a perceiving mind, so must it be with the first. Who can doubt it, when they bear the same name?

But not only is this passage an amusing sample of sophistical ingenuity, adroitly assuming the very conclusion to be established, it furnishes us also with a notable instance of what I have described in a preceding Letter, — assigning imaginary facts in explanation of real phenomena. So long as Berkeley did not speculate on the question of source or cause, his designating objects by the name of ideas would amount merely to an eccentric and inconvenient peculiarity in nomenclature; but when he goes further than the fact of existence, and assigns an origin to the important class of ideas passing under the appellation of objects or real things, he gets inevitably into the region of fiction. He boldly assumes the direct agency of "a more powerful spirit," and asserts that ideas of this class — these so-called real things — are imprinted on the senses of mankind by the Author of Nature.

But, in the first place, we have no evidence whatever, and certainly no perception, of the agency here ascribed to the Author of Nature in regard to ideas; the assertion is a mere, but very extrava-

gant, conjecture: and secondly, the process spoken of is itself wholly unknown to us. We are utterly unconscious of such an operation as ideas being imprinted on the senses at all: it is purely fictitious.*

If the doctrine, moreover, were true, the Deity would obviously be at the command of any one who chose to open or shut his eyes; and many other consequences would be deducible, which the reverence due to the subject disinclines me from naming.

And mark the metaphysical result which would inevitably flow from admitting it. When he speaks of imprinting ideas on the senses, in what light does he intend the senses to be regarded? Clearly they can be nothing, on his system, but ideas; and thus his doctrine teaches that what we term external objects are only ideas imprinted on other ideas by the Author of Nature.

The strangeness, not to say absurdity, of the doctrine reaches its climax in the case of recollecting or conceiving objects formerly perceived, or of having in the mind what Berkeley himself denominates representations. This would be having *ideas*

* Berkeley, in a subsequent stage of the discussion, when he saw it needful to soften or modify some preceding passages, says that, by "being imprinted on the senses," he means only that "the mind is affected from without, or by some being distinct from itself;" but he cannot be supposed by this to relinquish either the senses as the channel, or the direct agency of the Deity as the immediate cause.

of the *ideas* which had been imprinted on other *ideas*.

We shall find a similar intermixture of the fictitious or conjectural, if we trace the other attributes or characteristics of the Berkeleian idea as delineated by his own hand.

It is described by him in various, but not always consistent, terms.

To be perceived constitutes its very existence, or, as he himself expresses it, its *esse* is *percipi* *: it is a distinct individual entity *in* the mind; for he tells us that it is not a mode or property *of* the mind, but it is *in* the mind that perceives it †: and by saying it is in the mind, he means, as he explains, that it is the immediate object of the understanding. ‡ Further, it is independent of the mind, and may become exterior to it §, and when it is not perceived by one mind, it is or may be perceived by another. ‖ Moreover, it is a passive, inert, and unthinking being ⸸, with a spiritual substratum.

You may, perhaps, suppose its existence to be very precarious, since that existence depends altogether on its being perceived: but this is provided against; for although it is continually quitting individual minds, it by no means ceases to exist; since even should it fail to have a domicile in yours, or

* Works, vol. 1. p. 24. (3 vols. 8vo., Priestley, London, 1820.)
† p. 192. ‡ p. 208. § p. 183.
‖ p. 184. ⸸ Ibid. and p. 35.

mine, or any other created mind, it still exists in the mind of the Author of Nature.* Hence, Berkeley's bold position, which has startled many a student, "that all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth,—in a word, all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world,— have not any subsistence without a mind, that their being is to be perceived or known†," shrinks, on a close inspection, to a needless flourish of insecurity and precariousness to alarm the imagination, inasmuch as when they are not perceived by any created being (or to be sure whether they are or are not), they are perceived by the Omniscient Creator; and thus their permanent existence, as Berkeley himself indeed points out, is secure.

Such is a brief statement or sketch of the *Berkeleian idea.* Without troubling you by pointing out particular instances, I will content myself with observing that, where the delineation at all differs from what can be said of an external object, it is imaginary or conjectural.

* Vol. 1. p. 183. † p. 26.

LETTER XVI.

THEORIES OF PERCEPTION, CONTINUED.—BERKELEY.

THE discussion, I fear, has already become wearisome, but for the full comprehension of Berkeley's theory, it is necessary to take into view, not only the relation in which it stands to the common opinion of men, but also his own account of that relation; the latter of which is by no means precise and luminous.

When he started on his wild metaphysical enterprise, he very justly considered himself as engaged in proving that mankind were involved in a strange error; that what they mistook for an external, material, independent world, was merely an ideal one, dependent on being perceived; that there was a radical difference between himself and them regarding it.

Accordingly, he at first describes them, in a passage before quoted, as being strangely pervaded with the opinion that mountains and rivers have a natural or real existence, distinct from their being perceived. In the progress of his speculations, however, he veers round, and claims the majority of his fellow-creatures—the vulgar—as concurring in their views with himself.

Thus, in answer to the charge of Hylas, that Philonous is for changing all things into ideas, he makes the latter say:—

"You mistake me. I am not for changing things into ideas, but rather ideas into things; since those immediate objects of perception which, according to you, are only appearances of things, I take to be the real things themselves."*

The same speaker afterwards says:—"We both, therefore, agree in this, that we perceive only sensible forms; but herein we differ, you will have them to be empty appearances, I real beings. In short, you do not trust your senses, I do."

Again, he asks his opponent, "Whether, the premises considered, it be not the wisest way to follow nature, trust your senses, and, laying aside all anxious thought about unknown natures and substances, admit, with the vulgar, those for real things which are perceived by the senses."†

In all this, however, there is something scarcely ingenuous. It wears at least that appearance of disingenuousness which is frequently the result of being thoroughly possessed by some favourite theory.

The truth is, that Berkeley's ranging himself with the vulgar in opinion, contrary to his antecedent declarations, is in reference not to the great question "whether there is an independent external world," but to certain subordinate inquiries confined almost

* Works, vol. 1. p. 201. † p. 203.

altogether to philosophers, one of which is, whether, besides the qualities we perceive through our organs of sense, there is an occult *substratum*,—a problem about which the vulgar, I imagine, seldom concern themselves, and may be considered as virtually, or by implication, siding with him.

But, although a Berkeleian must deny a substratum of this kind, his antagonist, so far from being bound to maintain it, may consistently unite with him in the denial.

In the same way Berkeley claims the multitude for his supporters, when he is arguing against the opinion that what we perceive by the senses, are only images or copies of real things. But on this point, again, any one may agree with him (as I myself do), and still wholly dissent from his peculiar theory.

The tendency of claiming, in this manner, the concurrence of mankind at large, which he knew was only on minor points, without distinctly keeping the questions apart, was to engender confusion; although after all he is obliged, before he closes the discussion, to confess a radical difference between himself and others on the paramount question at issue.

"In common talk," he says, "the objects of our senses are not termed *ideas* but *things*. Call them so still, provided you do not attribute to them any *absolute external existence*, and I shall never quarrel with you for a word."

Now it is just this absolute external existence, which is firmly held by the vulgar, or, rather, which they never think of questioning. The "common talk" referred to implies it, and Berkeley, being cognisant of the fact, should not have attempted to range the multitude on his side.

"Well, then," you will be disposed to ask, "what, after all these distinctions and disputes, is really the difference, stated in plain, unequivocal language, between Berkeley and other philosophers, or, rather, between him and mankind in general? What is the great peculiarity in the system about which all this controversy is raised, on which he has lavished such inexhaustible ingenuity, and to which men still turn with bewildered understandings and perplexed looks?

The difference between him and others may be stated, I think, in a few simple propositions.

1. He maintains that the objects we perceive (which he chooses to call ideas) are, equally with representative ideas, mental, or in the mind: other people maintain that they are non-mental, or out of the mind.
2. He maintains that these objects, being mental, do not, and cannot, exist unperceived: other people maintain, that the fact of objects (which they deny to be mental) being perceived or unperceived can make no difference to the existence of such objects.
3. He maintains that the Author of "Nature"

imprints these objects or ideas on the senses, or directly affects the mind with them: other people maintain, that objects are perceived when they are brought before the organs of sense in the natural order of events.

Now, the first of these positions is, as I have repeatedly said, a mere gratuitous assertion: the second is an inference from the first, and cannot, in its logical character, mount higher than its source: the third is of precisely the same nature as the other two. Thus the whole of that in which Berkeley differs from the rest of mankind is a tissue of groundless assumptions.

In the last page but one of his "Dialogues" there is a remarkable declaration, which sums up in a few words what he teaches, and more accurately describes, than some antecedent representations had done, the relation in which what he teaches stands to common opinion; while at the same time, it clearly exhibits the philosophical error which misled him into his subtile and sophistical speculations. It is in these respects a most valuable passage.

"I do not pretend," says Philonous, "to be a setter up of *new notions*. My endeavours tend only to unite and place in a clearer light that truth which was before shared between the vulgar and the philosophers: the former being of opinion that *those things they immediately perceive are the real things;* and the latter, that *the things immediately*

perceived are ideas which exist only in the mind; which two notions, put together, do, in effect, constitute the substance of what I advance."

That is to say, "I maintain that I perceive real things, not images or representations of them; but at the same time that these real things are only ideas, and ideas can exist only in the mind."

Here the original fallacy which gave rise to this maze of ingenious speculation stands out—the fallacy of calling real things by the name of ideas, and forthwith treating them as if they possessed the characteristics of purely mental phenomena. If Berkeley had kept with the vulgar, he would have been right. It was the erroneous dogma of the philosophers that threw him wrong, and seduced him into the attempt to reconcile propositions which must ever remain at variance.

The correct and simple doctrine on the subject, which Berkeley has done so much to perplex, lies in a nut-shell. We perceive external objects, and, so far from perceiving ideas, as in his incorrect and tautological phraseology* Berkeley asserts, ideas in their proper sense are not at all concerned in perception.

Further, it is not what we perceive that is mental, but the act, or state, or affection of perceiving it; two distinct things, which Berkeley

* I call it tautological, because he himself says, "to *have an idea* is all one as to *perceive;*" whence, to perceive an idea is to have an idea of an idea.

confounds. The act of perceiving can be only in the mind, or, in other words, done by a percipient being; but the object perceived through the organs of sense can exist only out of the mind, or distinct from the percipient being; nor can there be any reason to doubt that it exists when no percipient being is present to perceive it.

It surely does not require much reflection to see, although it has been marvellously overlooked, that the perception of external objects through the organs of sense cannot be consistently regarded as anything else than a primary mode of consciousness which is not to be resolved into any other, and beyond which it is impossible to push our inquiries. The truth of this perception, or, what is the same thing, the existence of external objects, is consequently not susceptible of either proof or disproof. For let us pause a moment and reflect what constitutes proof—what proof is. It is neither more nor less than some fact which causes us, or which is adduced for the purpose of causing us, to discern or to believe some other fact.

Now, a fact must be either external or internal, material or mental, relating to the world without or the world within. But an external fact cannot be adduced in proof that there are such things as external objects; for that would be alleging as evidence the very truth to be proved. Nor can it be adduced in disproof, for that would be affirming

the positive existence of a thing in order to disprove its existence.

But if an external fact cannot in this case be brought forward in proof or disproof, it is equally plain that a purely mental or internal fact cannot be adduced for either purpose.

The only mental or internal fact which can be mentioned as at all relating to the subject is, that we perceive external objects: but this cannot of course be alleged in proof of itself, or of its own truth; nor can it be brought without egregious absurdity in disproof of itself.

That there are external objects perceived by us is therefore a primary fact, which admits neither of being proved nor of being disproved, and it is amazing that philosophers of great depth and acuteness should have attempted to do either.

LETTER XVII.

THEORIES OF PERCEPTION, CONTINUED.—BERKELEY, HUME, AND BROWN.

I HAVE not yet done with the ideal theory.

So transparent appears to me the assumption of the identical point to be proved, as I showed in my last Letter, that I cannot myself refrain from marvelling how this baseless theory should ever have been considered both by its supporters, and even by some of those who have dissented from it, as unanswerable.

Hume, for example, whose doctrine I purpose next to examine, as set forth in the work which he expressly desired might alone be regarded as containing his philosophical opinions, declares that Berkeley's arguments admit of no answer; adding, however, that they produce no conviction *:—an impossible state of things. That they produce no conviction indicates not only that an answer may be found, but that the reason may be assigned why the arguments seem to be incontrovertible. If a philosopher in such a case appears irrefutable in argument, it

* Essays and Treatises, vol. 2. note N.

is almost invariably because he has, by the substitution of one term for another, or by the identification of two different things, incorporated in his premises the truth of the very conclusion he is labouring to enforce. In this predicament Berkeley stands, as I have shown, or endeavoured to show; and seeing that he begins by begging the question, I cannot certainly deem him entitled to the praise of reasoning well in support of his thesis.

Much as his arguments have been extolled, whoever closely examines them will find that he does not adduce a single one (arguments in a circle excepted) to prove his fundamental position; but, having assumed it without proof, he is thenceforward occupied, partly in deducing conclusions from it, partly in explaining facts according to it, partly in contending with objections which nothing but his original assumption enables him to combat, partly in overturning doctrines not necessarily held in connexion with the absolute existence of an external world, and partly in attempting, by a retroactive process, to confirm the truth of the assumed proposition from its own consequences.

That in doing this he has shown great logical adroitness and fertility of invention, much metaphysical knowledge and acumen, a wide range of thought, and a fluent and felicitous style, I most cheerfully admit.

Without some such high qualities as these, indeed, his theory could never have met with the reception

which it obtained. What has rendered them of no effect in the establishment of truth, is the gratuitous and groundless assumption from which he so unconsciously sets out.

Hume's strong declaration as to the irrefutable character of Berkeley's arguments, whether with or without conviction of the position they were brought to prove, is the more extraordinary that, although he professedly favours Berkeley's theory, most of his expressions clearly imply Locke's untenable position already examined, which Berkeley explicitly rejects. After remarking that mankind in general "suppose the very images presented by the senses to be the external objects, and never entertain the suspicion that the one are nothing but representations of the other," Hume goes on to assert, "that no man who reflects ever doubted that the existences which we consider when we say, *this house*, and *that land*, are nothing but perceptions in the mind, and fleeting copies or representations of other existences which remain uniform and independent." Here, in direct contradiction to Berkeley, he plainly admits the independent existence of external objects, although he maintains in the same breath that we perceive nothing but representations of them, and even speaks of such objects as remaining uniform and independent existences in contrast with their copies, which are fleeting.* Yet he subsequently says, "The mind

* Berkeley, as already explained, does not maintain that

has never anything present to it but the perceptions, and cannot possibly reach any experience of their connection with objects. The supposition of such a connection is therefore without any foundation in reasoning."

It is scarcely needful to point out here the inconsistent assertions, that there are firm and independent existences of which we perceive only the copies or representations, and yet that we cannot possibly attain to any knowledge of such existences, nor to any experience of their connection with the said copies, consequently not even to the knowledge that the copies we perceive *are* copies, or that such existences exist.

Nor ought we to overlook the quiet self-complacent way in which, after assuming the really monstrous fiction that there are images presented by the senses, he puts all persons who doubt that external objects, houses and land, are nothing but perceptions or mental representations, into the dreaded class of the unreflecting.

Hume, as a metaphysician, is exceedingly ingenious, inventive, acute, and profound; but, at the same time, loose and inaccurate. While he is less consistent on the question before us than his distinguished predecessor in philosophy, whose logic he extols, but whose theory (if he intends the passages

there are both ideas and objects, the one being copies of the other, but that objects *are* ideas.

I have quoted to be an account of it),* he marvellously misconceives, he falls with him into the self-contradictions and nullities of assertion in which all must involve themselves who deny that we directly perceive external objects. With all their acuteness and ingenuity, they are here completely foiled. They cannot bring an argument in support of their theory, however that theory may be shaped, which is not either inconsistent with itself, or which does not rest on the precise ground that they are seeking to establish by it.

Perhaps the subtlest piece of sophistry on the sceptical side of the question respecting the existence of an external world, is one which I find nowhere more plausibly stated than in the Lectures of Dr. Thomas Brown, who, thinking with Hume, that as a mere play of reasoning the sceptical argument admits of no reply, contends at the same time that Berkeley's system presents an imperfect and inaccurate view of that argument.

Speaking of Dr. Reid, in reference to his refuta-

* In the section of his Inquiry into the Human Understanding entitled "Of the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy," he does not introduce the name of Berkeley, so that there may be a doubt whether he conceived himself to be giving an account of the theory of the latter in the passages referred to; but as he mentions him in a note, appended to the section, beginning "this argument is drawn from Dr. Berkeley;" and in reference to the whole of the doctor's arguments pronounces that they admit of no answer, it is natural to conclude that he supposed himself to be describing Berkeley's peculiar views.

tion of Berkeley, the author of the Lectures proceeds as follows:—

"It is vain for him to say, that the scepticism, proceeding as he thinks, on the belief of ideas in the mind, as direct objects of perception, must fall with these ideas; for though the scepticism may be *consistent* with the belief of ideas as separate existences in the mind, it does not *depend*, in the slightest degree, on their existence or non-existence. We have only to change the term *ideas* into the synonymous phrase *affections or states of the mind*, and the scepticism, if not stronger, is at least in strength exactly what it was before. In the one case the sceptic will say, that we are sensible of *ideas* only, not of *external objects*, which may have *no resemblance to our ideas;** in the other case, that perception is but a state of mind as much as any of our other feelings, and that we are conscious only of this, and other *states or affections of our mind*, which have variously succeeded each other, and not of *external objects*, *which themselves can be no parts of that train of mental consciousness*."

"Beyond this consciousness," it is afterwards added, the sceptic might maintain that we can know nothing.

Now this, like other attempts of the same kind, is both self-inconsistent, and a gratuitous assertion of what, if it is maintained at all, ought to be

* This applies to Hume's doctrine, but not to Berkeley's.

proved. Perception, as he affirms, is undoubtedly a state of mind; but it is a state which is necessarily relative to a *perceived object*, and which cannot either take place or be conceived without it. The term has no meaning but in reference to an object distinct from the percipient. To speak of an act of perceiving as taking place without something perceived, is no less a contradiction than to speak of such an act as taking place without a perceiver. By saying it is only a state of mind, Dr. Brown covertly and indirectly excludes the essential correlative. But, as I have shown in a former letter, you cannot take one half of the two-fold fact and drop the other. Standing, for example, is one of the acts of a human being, but he cannot do it without something that is stood upon. To assume one part of such a double, yet indivisible fact, and wholly pass over an equally essential constituent part, is to beg the question. It is as if some one should say,—"Standing is only a certain position of the body, and the body may be put into the same position without there being anything to stand upon: therefore, the latter is not a necessary part of the state or process."

Further, in the phrase, "we are not conscious of external objects," Dr. Brown again begs the question, and is sufficiently met by the counter assertion that we are conscious of perceiving them. External objects being an integrant part of the act of perception, perceiving objects is, as an indivisible whole, a portion of the train of consciousness.

The same kind of sceptical argument which I have here encountered, as adduced by Dr. Brown, might be employed with equal cogency to throw a doubt on those other states of mind of which he speaks as having succeeded each other; nay, even on our very existence before the actual moment, and reduce it to a single point of time.

For, it is plain that my having lived an hour ago is only a matter of recollection; and recollection is only a state of mind, like any other of our feelings. I believe, it is true, that I was then living, but the belief itself is nothing but a state of mind; the very same mental condition might be felt, for aught I know, without the fact of my prior existence having really happened. I can have no proof, at any rate, that it is not so. All that I know is, my present state of consciousness, which, although retrospective in seeming, and called recollection, no more implies that I lived an hour ago than the state of consciousness, which is called perception, implies the existence of external objects.

All that remains, then, to supply the place of logical demonstration is the paramount force of the irresistible belief which I feel in my own previous existence. My existence half-an-hour ago, and the external independent existence of the paper on which I am writing, and the pen which I hold in my hand, are thus, to say the least, equally problematical.

Dr. Brown, it will be observed, while he gives his sceptical argument about an external world as unanswerable, by no means impugns on his own part the existence of objects without us, but characterises our mental state relating to it as an irresistible conviction. The belief, he says, of a system of external things, is a state of mind which itself forms, and will ever form, a part of the train of our consciousness.

In such expressions will be seen, if I mistake not, the disadvantage of not confining the term belief to matters of a contingent character, or to those conclusions and propositions which can rest on nothing stronger than contingent proofs.

We cannot, as I have shown, have any *evidence* for the existence of external objects, nor is it a case in which evidence can be required, or be pertinent, or even admissible.

Evidence, or, in other words, the adduction of something we know, is needed only to enable us to believe something we cannot or do not know. But to perceive external objects is to know them; than this we can conceive no other or higher knowledge of material things.

It is, therefore, in my view, an injurious perversion of language to say that we believe in their existence, when we can use the completer and superior assertion that we know it.

To apply the term belief to this knowledge is to rank it with mental states, admitting more or less

(however infinitesimal the portion) of doubt, and, consequently, tends to the confusion of intellectual phenomena, which accuracy of thought requires to be carefully distinguished. It unsettles and renders indefinite the acceptation of both knowing and believing.

I must crave your patience while I proceed to mention another radical fallacy in the ideal theory, whatever may be the form in which it is presented. There is in it a latent self-contradiction which I think you will readily discover when I point it out. Although my argument lies more directly against Berkeley's form of the theory, it will apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to any other.

Mark what is comprehended in the assertion here in question, that we perceive ideas in the mind, and do not perceive independent external objects. By it two classes of entities are plainly discriminated: ideas in the mind are placed in contradistinction to material things out of the mind.

Well, observe the consequences: in order to place two things in contradistinction to each other, you must of course know both. When you assert that objects are only ideas in the mind, not things out of the mind, you must, in order to speak rationally and consistently, know what things out of the mind are.

But, as the theoretic idealist denies altogether this knowledge of independent material things out of the mind, he is precluded from predicating what

they are or what they are not; and, consequently, when he speaks of them at all, and especially in contradistinction to ideas in the mind, it must be without any meaning except what is derived from the palpable self-contradiction of assuming the knowledge he denies. He cannot form any proposition about them without presupposing their having been perceived as external.

When he tells us that it is impossible there should be any such thing as an outward object, how or where did he obtain the meaning of the last term of his own assertion?

If, indeed, these ideas were truly the sole things that we perceive, neither Berkeley nor any other philosopher could ever have dreamed of asserting that we know nothing else, any more than the silliest babbler in science would dream of informing his neighbours that gold is only gold, and not an unknown substance *x*.

The very position, in a word, that we perceive nothing but ideas *in* the mind could not have been thought of unless we had perceived something different from them—something *out* of the mind.

A Berkeleian is reduced, in truth, to this dilemma: if he knows what external things are, it can be only by perceiving them as external,—which contradicts his theory. If, on the other hand, he does not know what they are, he is incapable of using the expression external with any meaning, and could,

in fact, never have invented or thought of employing it.

The same result is obtained from Berkeley's doctrine of the correspondence of perception and conception, a point of view which merely exhibits the contradiction in a slightly varied form. He repeatedly insists that we can conceive nothing except as we have perceived it. "My conceiving power," he says, "does not extend beyond real existence or perception." But he also teaches that we cannot *perceive* objects as external; we consequently cannot *conceive* them as external. When, therefore, he speaks of external objects, he speaks of things of which, by his own doctrine, he can form no conception—in other words, he falls into unmeaning propositions.

Again, his assertions afford this curious result.

When he affirms it to be impossible to *conceive* anything otherwise than as we have *perceived* it, he means, according to his own interpretation, that we can conceive only those ideas which the Author of Nature had previously imprinted on the senses. Well, then, the Deity either imprints the tree before me on my senses, as external, or he does not: if he does, then the tree *is* external, or he imprints what is false; if he does not imprint it as external, how came I by such an impression or idea at all?

LETTER XVIII.

THEORIES OF PERCEPTION CONTINUED. — HOBBES, D'ALEMBERT, AND STEWART.

The course of these discussions has brought me to a point that is favourable for considering some parts of the subject of perception which have seldom been perspicuously treated.

A common misapprehension about perception appears to me to arise from not clearly and steadily distinguishing the material operations concerned and the conscious state which is the result of them.

The whole process may be described in general terms as follows:—

Certain qualities in the object external to our bodily frame, whether operating or not through an inorganic medium, interposed between the object and the organs of sense, occasion certain conditions in the matter composing or pervading our nerves and brain. These conditions in the nerves and brain are followed or accompanied by certain states of consciousness, which states of consciousness we designate by the phrase, the perception of external objects.

Now it is important to remark two facts in

relation to such cases of action on our nervous system: —

1. When we perceive an object, we have not any consciousness of the conditions of the nerves and brain concerned in the resulting act of perception, nor of the motions of any inorganic medium between the object and our organ: we are conscious of perceiving the external object, and nothing else. In seeing we are not conscious of the retina, nor of the rays of light impinging upon it, nor of the picture there delineated. In hearing we are not conscious of the drum of the ear, nor of the pulses of the air by which it is struck, nor, in either case, of any communication between those parts and the brain.

2. As we are unconscious of the physical process, so what we are conscious of perceiving is not at all affected by our being able or unable to trace that process of which perception is the result. In other words, our perception of external objects is not alterable by any insight or want of insight into its physical causes. What is designated by the words "seeing an object," is the same mental state in the child, the savage, and the philosopher, and as a simple modification of consciousness neither wants nor admits of any analysis or explanation. Although the physical events leading to it may be minutely investigated, it cannot itself be resolved into any other mental state or states.

You may trace the course of light from the

object to the organ, you may follow its refractions by the lens of the eye, you may detect the picture on the retina, you may explore the connection of the optic nerves with the brain; but you do not by all these discoveries, valuable as they are, alter in the slightest degree the resulting state of consciousness denominated seeing the object. Although they are facts in the physical process absolutely necessary to the result, a knowledge of them does not in the least modify the consequent perception.

Hence it follows that no extent of investigation, no discovery in science, can ever change the character of our acquaintance with external objects. If we could push our insight of nature to the utmost imaginable extreme, if we could ascertain the shape and pursue the movements of every particle of matter in the world around us, we should still have only the same *kind* of knowledge, although highly exalted in degree, which we have now: we should still be acquainted with the material universe only through our sensitive organs. The telescope and microscope, while they extend the reach of our senses, do not in the faintest degree alter the nature of our perceptions. And further, all the various steps in the physical process through which we become cognisant of any external object, are external objects themselves, and are perceived in the same way as the rest.

Another point which it may appear almost puerile to insist upon, but which, as will hereafter appear,

it is needful to notice, is that our acts or states of perception cannot produce any effect upon the objects perceived. The mere action of looking at an object does not manifestly affect its qualities; it merely presents an organ for some of those qualities to act upon: nor does the withdrawal of the look make the slightest difference in their nature; it does no more than take away the nervous expanse on which some of them operated.

The simple and proper view is, that in perception, except by the act of directing our organs to external objects, we are passive, and may be described as possessing organs through which, without any other active cooperation on our part, certain conditions of matter produce in us states of consciousness termed the perception of objects or their qualities.

Some of these qualities, it is almost needless to say, are perceived through one organ and its nervous apparatus, some through another.

Colour is a quality of matter perceptible, as far as we know (speaking of terrestrial existences), only by a being provided with an organ called an eye: sound only by a being provided with an organ called an ear.

When a percipient being having such organs, is placed amongst these conditions or qualities of matter, he perceives certain objects; that is, he sees colours and hears sounds: when he is removed from them, the conditions continue to exist, but

the objects of course are unperceived—the act of perception ceases.

In illustration of this subject, let us turn to some well known combination of the visible and the audible, such as the magnificent Falls of Niagara.

Here for ages, before a human eye ever looked upon them, or a human ear ever heard their deafening thunder, the same actions were taking place in the water and the air as take place in the presence of eager crowds of modern visitors. The rays of the sun, whenever they fell on the scene, were refracted by the vapour rising above the torrent; the air was constantly agitated by the vast mass of water precipitating itself over the rock. But there was no perception of what was going on, of the tranquil iris bending over the abyss, or of the roar of the headlong cataract. It required a being endowed with the special organs called eyes and ears to see the beautiful bow, and to hear the stupendous roar. The moment these organs were brought into contact with the agencies at work, the iris and the roar were perceived.

Some one, nevertheless, may reply that, even according to the representation just given, colour (to speak only of one quality for the sake of simplification) does not exist in the object when no eye looks upon it. Yes, I rejoin, it exists ready to present itself to any visual organ which may be turned towards it. The perception of colour, indeed, would not exist in the supposed case, because

it is a mental act, and the difficulty on your part arises from your meaning by the term colour a perceived instead of a perceptible quality. A perceived quality cannot of course exist without a percipient, but the quality or object is at all times perceptible, and continues to exist unaltered whether your eye is upon it or not. You surely do not require that an object should *look* coloured when there is no eye to see it. The only possible thing is that it should appear so whenever there is a spectator to observe it. This is all that can be meant by a coloured body; it is a body that you always perceive to be coloured when you turn your eyes upon it. How it looks when unseen is a question I do not presume to interfere with, not being able to conceive any method by which so self-contradictory an inquiry can be satisfied.

A favourite theory on this particular subject of colour has been that the colour is in the mind; according to some that it inheres in the mind; and in the language of others, that the mind spreads it over external objects; all which are attempts to explain what does not require or admit of explanation.

The preceding considerations will, I think, enable us to discern where the weakness of this kind of speculation lies.

Let us first examine it as stated by Hobbes.

He maintains "that the subject wherein colour and image are inherent, is not the object or thing

seen: that there is nothing *without us* (really) which we call an image or colour; that the said image or colour is but *an apparition to us, of the motion, agitation, or alteration which the object worketh in the brain* or spirits, or some internal substance of the head; that as in vision, so also in *conceptions* that arise from the other senses, *the subject of their inherence is not the object but the sentient.*" He subsequently adds: "whatsoever accidents or qualities our senses make us think there be in the world, *they be not there, but are seeming and apparitions only:* the things that really are in the world without us, are those motions by which these seemings are caused."

Here it is to be remarked, in the first place, that the image [object] or colour is asserted to be only the appearance to us of the motion worked in the brain.

Supposing such a motion to take place (which is doubtless a very probable inference), yet, as I have already explained, we are not in the least conscious of it, and consequently it cannot be said to appear to us; it may be the cause of the appearance,—*i. e.*, of our seeing the coloured object, but cannot be that which we see, or the appearance itself. The supposed motion in the brain is a physical event, which we infer but do not perceive; the result—the perception of the object—is a mental one, or, in other words, it is the particular state of consciousness called seeing.

That "there is nothing without us which we call an image or colour" is obviously not only a mere assumption, but also at variance with our consciousness. We are conscious of perceiving the image or colour (or, more correctly, coloured object) as external—as something different from ourselves.

To say that the colour inheres in the mind—a vague phrase at the best—is, in truth, to assert that the mind is coloured, or, in equivalent language, that we are conscious of an internal colour (green for example), as we are conscious of an emotion like joy or grief; whereas we are, in reality, conscious of perceiving an external colour.

A poet may be allowed to talk of "the soft green of the soul," but a philosopher can scarcely be permitted to use language which converts such figures into literal facts.

You will probably notice that there is an ambiguity in Hobbes's statement, which, if unexplained, may occasion my strictures to appear unjust. At first he speaks of *colour* as being inherent in the mind, afterwards of the conception* (*i. e.*, perception) of it being so. Between these two statements there is a radical difference: the first erroneously affirming an *external object* to be in the mind, the second truly affirming *the perception of it*

* Hobbes unfortunately uses the word *conception* for both what we perceive through the organs of sense, and the subsequent idea or recollection of it.

to be mental; but it is plain that the former was the expression of his real meaning.

In regard to his doctrine in the last sentence of the extract, that the real things without us are motions, he overlooks that if this could be verified, such motions would still, according to his own showing, be only appearances to the observer. We cannot know any motions but such as are visible or tangible; but whatever is visible or tangible is, according to him, only *seeming;* therefore, after all, his real things, or motions, turn out to be merely appearances, and the conclusion to which he must logically come, is that, for us at least, there is nothing but appearances in the world.

Perhaps, however, the most striking exhibition of this unsubstantial theory, with some variations, is presented to us by D'Alembert.

"It is very evident," he says, "that the word colour does not denote any property of matter, but only a modification of the mind; that whiteness, for example, redness, &c., exist only in us, and not at all in the body to which we refer them: nevertheless, this disposition, which, by a habit acquired in infancy, we possess, to refer to a material and divisible substance what really belongs to a spiritual and simple one, is a very singular thing, and worthy of the attention of metaphysicians; and nothing is perhaps more extraordinary in the operations of the mind than to

see it *transport its sensations out of itself and spread them, so to speak, over a substance to which they cannot belong.*" Mr. Stewart, who has quoted this passage more than once, as if it had particularly charmed his imagination (and it is certainly quite consonant with his style of thought), says: "It would be difficult to state the fact in question in terms more brief, precise, and perspicuous." In regard to the diction, I will not dissent from the eulogy; but to praise the passage as a statement of fact, is particularly unfortunate.

Having already explained that colour is a material or external property, and the perception of it is all that is mental, I may at once pass on to the lively picture of the mind transporting its sensations out of itself and spreading them over external objects. Although this beautiful description may be considered as figurative (the idea, in truth, could not be otherwise expressed), it is obviously meant to assert that the mind literally, in some way or other, imparts to the objects the colours in which they are arrayed.

Of such a process, and every step implied in it, I am, for my own part, wholly unconscious; and must regard it, on that account, to be altogether imaginary and fictitious, as well as for reasons which I will proceed to assign.

If it were real, the sensation of any colour (*green*, for example) must first exist in the mind, for how-

ever short a time, as a purely internal feeling, arising, nevertheless, from some unperceived substance before the organ of vision. But then comes the problem—how we are to discover that an imperceptible external object exists which, in some inexplicable way, has put our minds upon feeling *green*, and which in its nude achromatic state is waiting outside to be invested with that colour. What, too, is it (we are irresistibly led to ask) that causes us to spread *green* over the growing wheat, and *red* over the poppy which intrudes amongst it? I am surprised not only at Mr. Stewart's overlooking these legitimate consequences of the doctrine he so cordially and fully accepted, but that he failed also to see how completely it puts an end to his maintaining the visual perception of an external world, and ranks him so far amongst the idealists. It is impossible, as all acknowledge, to see form and extension without colour; but since, according to the hypothesis, we do not at first see colour as external, it follows that we see nothing as external; so that, not only is there nothing to direct us in spreading the internal *green* over the external object (the disposition to do which D'Alembert curiously ascribes to habit), but there is no mode of ascertaining through the organ of sight that there is anything external at all. Everything is mental; if colour is in the mind, as he teaches, then must form and extension be there too; and how they are to be got out, or made to appear

external, passes all comprehension. The whole theory is due to the imagination.

In this singular metaphysical flight the French and the English philosopher have alike "covered their eyes with their wings."

LETTER XIX.

THEORIES OF PERCEPTION CONTINUED.—KANT.

After having followed me through an examination of the doctrines of Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, D'Alembert, and Stewart on the perception of external objects, I fear you will scarcely have patience to encounter a repetition of the scrutiny directed to the analogous doctrines of Kant.

It is, however, of some importance, I think, to take his mode of presenting the question into consideration, and to put a succinct exposure of its fallacies on record. At the same time, if you feel weary of these vain speculations raised about a very simple matter, you will not lose much by skipping over the whole of the present Letter and the one immediately following, as they will contain little but a renewed examination of assumptions and assertions already disposed of, under a different form.

For the sake of perspicuity as well as to relieve the close attention required by these abstruse questions, I purpose to notice, first, Kant's negative doctrine (if I may so term it) respecting the nature of our perception or knowledge of external things; and, secondly, his positive doctrine respecting the action of our minds upon them.

In pursuance of this plan, I will devote the present Letter to his doctrine respecting our knowledge of the external world.

Following after Locke, he maintains in various forms of expression, but with more thoroughness and consistency than the English philosopher, that we have, in reality, no knowledge of external things.

Sometimes he tells us that we perceive only phenomena, not things in themselves; or, as he himself expresses it, "that all our intuition is nothing but the representation of phenomenon;" "that the things which we envisage [perceive through the senses] are not that in themselves for which we take them." Again he affirms, "We know nothing but our manner of perceiving them;" "what the objects would be in themselves would still never be known by the clearest cognition of their phenomenon, which alone is given to us." He proceeds to say, that "by our sensibility [*i. e.* through our organs of sense], we are not acquainted merely obscurely, but not at all, with the quality of things in themselves; and so soon as we remove our subjective quality [*i. e.* the percipient faculty or mind], the represented object, together with the properties which the sensible intuition attributed to it, is not to be met with anywhere; neither can it be met with, since this very subjective quality determines the form of the object as phenomenon."*

* Critick of Pure Reason, p. 47.

Here he describes in various phrases the process of perception, or rather non-perception, through the organs of sense; but in all of them there are inconsistency and confusion of thought on the very surface.

He speaks of things as existing, yet tells us that we are incapable of perceiving or knowing them: we know only their phenomena, and they are not that in themselves for which we take them. But (to repeat an argument I have already used), if we are acquainted *only* with phenomena, how can we speak without self-contradiction of anything else? How can we find out that objects which we cannot know have any existence at all? How can we tell that what we perceive are only phenomena, and not real things, when, to distinguish between phenomena and real things, we must perceive not only the former, but the latter, which, we are told in the same breath, we are incapable of doing? Thus, if you say with Kant, that you perceive only phenomena, you subject yourself to the reply that it is impossible for you to tell that they are not realities, since you have nothing to compare them with; and as it is not worth while contending about a name, you may as well call them realities at once.

To the assertion that the things which we perceive are not in themselves what we take them to be—in other words, that the realities are unlike their phenomena, which is only the same doc-

trine in different phrase — a similar argument applies.

You can tell whether two things are alike or unlike only by perceiving them both, or having a knowledge of both. If you confess that you know nothing at all of one, you are plainly not in a condition to pronounce whether it is like or unlike the other: if you are not acquainted with the original, you cannot judge of the resemblance or want of resemblance in the copy.

Another strange position in the preceding passage is, that "we know nothing but our manner of perceiving objects," which, if not inconsistent with his other assertions, is at least equally self-contradictory. Knowing our manner of perceiving objects implies that we *do* perceive them, otherwise we assuredly could not know the manner of it. Mark, too, the assertion that, as soon as we remove our subjective quality, the represented object with its properties, is not and cannot be met with anywhere. Met with? By whom? "Meeting with" is the act of a percipient being, and, consequently, the assertion implies that, if we turn away from the object, it straightway becomes imperceptible not only to ourselves, but to any "subjective quality" that might go in search of it. On this theory every object would be created afresh in every act of perception, which is carrying the matter farther even than it was carried by Berkeley, who being put to a strait by the suppo-

sition that an idea would be annihilated when it ceased to be perceived by your mind or mine, adroitly took refuge in the allegation that this by no means followed, since it might be perceived by some other mind.

It is worth while to advert more particularly to the proposition often reiterated by Kant, that we cannot know things in themselves — a proposition extensively accepted by modern philosophers.

This is, in my view, a perfectly unmeaning assertion. We cannot form the slightest conception of knowing external things, except as we do know them, *i. e.* through the organs of sense. Do you demur at this ? Then be so good as to tell me the precise signification of knowing things in themselves; give me a specimen of that sort of knowledge we have not; and point out how you have gained so curious a piece of transcendental information.

No one manifestly is entitled to deny that our knowledge is of things in themselves, unless he not only possesses the sort of knowledge which he denies to others, and has found on comparison that we — the rest of the human race — have only a knowledge of things as they are *not* in themselves, but actually produces it for our examination. Till that is done, assertions about knowing things in themselves must be regarded as utterly without meaning.

Hobbes, whose doctrine, as we have seen, agrees

with that of Kant, in declaring what we perceive to be nothing but appearances, undertook to furnish the information I have asked for; he attempted to show that things in themselves are motions which give rise to the appearances perceived. His words (to repeat a single sentence of a passage before quoted and criticised) are, "Whatever accidents or qualities our senses make us think there be in the world, they be not there but are seeming and appearances only: *the things that really are in the world without us*, are those motions by which these seemings are caused."*

This, however, is only removing the phenomena a step back, and would not be accepted by Kant as at all reaching the transcendental objects—the things in themselves, which, according to him, we can never know. The motions in Hobbes's theory, could we follow them with the greatest minuteness, would, as I before remarked, be in their turn nothing but appearances; nor was it possible for either him or Kant to form the faintest conception of any objects or events generically different as wholes, or in their constituent parts from such as we actually observe.

* Here his argument is in effect that, because we can trace motions as concerned in producing the result called perceiving an object, we cannot perceive the object; while the truth is, as I have shown, that the perception of anything is not at all altered by our ignorance or knowledge of the material process through which it is effected.

LETTER XX.

THEORIES OF PERCEPTION CONTINUED. — KANT.

HAVING seen how, in what I have termed his negative doctrine, the German professor teaches that we know only appearances, not things in themselves, and that the real or transcendental objects behind these appearances lie hid under an impenetrable veil, and are not what we take them to be, it is natural for us to inquire into the positive part of the subject, to ask how these appearances arise? How is it that they present themselves before us?

And here we come to the greatest marvel of the whole doctrine: it turns out, after all, that the objects conjectured to lie hid behind the appearances (for conjecture is the only thing possible) do not originate the said appearances, but, that we ourselves in some inexplicable way create the phenomena or confer the qualities we perceive.

It is scarcely possible to state such a doctrine except in self-contradictory language; and it will be best, therefore, to keep to the philosopher's own expressions.

In a passage quoted in my last Letter, he tells us that the sensible intuition attributes to the represented object its qualities, and that when the subjective quality or mind is withdrawn, the said object and its qualities vanish and are nowhere to be found; that is, in a word, we create all the appearances we perceive. For observe, by this passage it is really asserted that we attribute *all* the properties to the object; which is a sheer impossibility, and to speak of it is nothing less than logically absurd. Without stopping to examine whether any real fact is expressed by the word *attribute* thus used, I may venture to say that, before we can attribute any qualities to an object, we must know something about it; that is, in fact, we must know that it exists; which implies that we know some of its qualities as an indispensable condition to our attributing others. An object to be perceived at all must have some quality or qualities to begin with. It is in itself, indeed, a quality or a congeries of qualities. You may possibly attribute other qualities besides the first, or, at least, you may speak of doing it without absurdity; but you cannot possibly attribute all, for that would be making out the object to be originally nothing; it would be ascribing properties to a non-entity.

In the same passage we are told, as a varied expression of the doctrine, that the subjective quality determines the form of the object as phenomenon, or, in other words, the mind determines the forms

or appearances of objects perceived; or, again, that it determines what appearances shall come before it.

I have already shown that with the exception of directing the organs to these objects, the mind is passive in perception; and that what is perceived by it is the joint result of the material conditions in the object and in the medium on the one hand, and of the material affections of the nerves and brain on the other. Such, at least, are all the facts we can trace in the process. To prove this it is sufficient to adduce the organs of hearing and of sight. The nerve of the ear is impassive to everything but aerial vibrations; the nerve of the eye to everything but light. Here it is surely the respective constitutions of the two nerves, conjointly with the motions in inorganic matter acting upon them, that determine the forms of the objects; in other words, determine the effects on the mind, or the resulting states of consciousness; or, in still different language, determine what is perceived.

If aerial vibrations acting on one kind of nerve on which rays of light have no effect, cause the percipient being to hear, and rays of light acting on another kind of nerve on which aerial vibrations have no effect, cause him to see, how can the mind be said to determine or even modify the result? The kind of perception is obviously determined by the kind of nerve acted upon. The species under each kind are as obviously determined respectively

by the special aerial vibrations and the special rays of light impinging on the organs.

The result in each case is a definite state or modification of consciousness; in the one case called seeing, in the other hearing.

Kant's doctrine is, that what we see and what we hear are determined by our own minds; and it amounts to this, that these states of consciousness determine the form and manner of their own existence; a species of self-creation to which there is no analogy in nature, nor even any counterpart in fiction, unless we turn to the Kilkenny cats, so famed for eating each other up, and suppose they had previously performed the rival wonder of respectively giving birth to themselves.*

Another mode of stating the doctrine, which I must not pass over without notice, is that the mind is not only acted upon, but acts upon the objects.

How the mind, however, can act upon anything

* This is by no means without parallel in German philosophy. Schelling, speaking of "the ground of the divine existence," which "might also," he says, "become that of things" is represented as proceeding thus: — "If, with reference to that ground with which we had become already acquainted under the name of absolute potence or of nature (*naturans*), we wish to bring it nearer to us men, we may say, that it is *the longing which that which is eternally one, feels to give birth to itself!*"—*Chalybäus on Speculative Philosophy, Edersheim's Translation*, p. 315. Hegel furnishes another instance according to the author last quoted, "The second point to which we have to attend is, *how this subjective notion gives existence to itself.*—Ibid. p. 386.

by merely perceiving it, I am unable for my own part to comprehend. We are certainly not conscious of such an operation, neither can we observe any external effects attributable to it. To act upon objects is to produce some change in them, and since, by looking on a tree or other visible entity, I certainly produce no change in it, the doctrine in that sense is obviously false. The simplest action of this kind conceivable is spreading colour over objects according to the theory of D'Alembert the value of which has been already exhibited. Let us suppose, therefore, the meaning to be (and this is the only other meaning I can imagine), that the mind operates upon the impression received from the object so as to modify it. If this were the fact, we should of course be conscious, first, of the original impression, and, then, of the act of modifying it. But of this process we are not conscious, nor is it what the supporters of the doctrine can consistently mean; they must intend it to be understood that the impression is, in some way or other, modified *in transitu* before we become conscious of it or receive it. But, an impression not received (*i. e.* an impression not impressed) is a contradiction. A physical impression on the organs of sense, or, in other words, a motion communicated to them, may be conceived to be modified on its passage to the brain (if for argument's sake such an expression may be used), by the quality or condition of the nerve; but a mental impression, if modified at all,

must be operated upon after having been produced, as it obviously cannot be modified before it exists. Of such a mental operation we are, I repeat, utterly unconscious.

All these various but equivalent propositions, that the mind attributes their qualities to objects, that it determines the forms or appearances of objects, that it acts upon them, are self-inconsistent; and they are, moreover, assertions of mental events which never occur, of which we have no internal consciousness, which we cannot externally observe, and which are in truth purely imaginary.

They appear to me to have arisen from an oversight or non-appreciation of the simple truth I have before urged, that perceiving external objects is a primary fact of consciousness not susceptible of analysis or explanation, and beyond which it is impossible to go.

You may analyse a compound visible object into its separate parts and attributes,—into its form, its colour, its motion, and so on; but this is an analysis of the thing perceived, not of the act of perception: or you may trace every step of the physical processes of which perception is the result; but this, as I have before remarked, does not in the slightest degree affect the simple and direct character of the act of perception itself.

Perceiving must be considered as a primary state of consciousness in the same way as pain or hunger or fear or joy, the causes of which you may

ascertain, but the nature of which no knowledge can alter and no explanation elucidate.

Kant thought he had made a great discovery in the method of treating these subjects when he proposed, instead of tracing the effects of objects on the mind, to reverse the process, by tracing the operation of the mind on objects — an operation which never happens to take place — comparing his procedure to that of Copernicus when putting aside the hypothesis that the whole heavens revolve round the motionless earth, that celebrated astronomer set himself to try what results would be obtained by supposing the heavens to be stationary and the earth to revolve on its axis.

The German metaphysician, nevertheless, flattered himself with a comparison which he was not entitled to draw.

The single point of analogy between the two cases—certainly not a very extraordinary one—is, that in both there was a change, or an alleged change, in method; and this single point is nothing compared with the concomitant discrepancy in every respect besides. Copernicus abandoned a cumbrous, complicated, and false hypothesis for a simple and true theory, beautifully consistent with all known phenomena; while Kant dismissed a simple and true mode of viewing his subject for an arbitrary supposition, not only without any foundation in facts, but absolutely opposed to them.

LETTER XXI.

IDEAS.

It scarcely needs stating, except by way of introduction to what follows, that as there are no independent entities called ideas or images in perception, so there are none in conception.

In the act of conceiving or recollecting an object in its absence, or when it no longer exists, there is obviously nothing but the concipient being affected in a particular way; there is by the supposition no external object before him, and there is no independent image, or form, or phantasm, present to his consciousness. It is simply the man mentally acting or mentally affected.

Thus the acts called respectively perception and conception agree in the negative circumstance, that in neither of them is there any independent entity called an idea or representation; but at the same time they differ in this, that there is in conception, or rather conception itself is, a state of mind corresponding to the term idea or representation, while in perception there is nothing at all to which the term idea or representation can be applied.

The false hypothesis, however, of there being

ideas in perception may have sprung out of the undeniable fact that there are ideas in conception.

As when we turn away from looking at a tree, we are conscious of an idea or image of it remaining, although the tree is no longer in sight, it may have easily occurred to any one that, since the idea of the tree must have been generated while the object was present, the said idea must have then existed in the mind; hence, it may be argued, it is by means of ideas that external objects are perceived, or, what amounts to the same thing, it is the ideas which are perceived and not the objects.

Such a train of loose reasoning would be most likely to occur to those who maintained that the ideas we have, when thinking of external objects, are entities substantially distinct from the mind. On that hypothesis the reflex deduction I have supposed would have much plausibility. Nothing would seem more reasonable than that such independent existences, if they had place in conception, should have previously had place in perception.

But, putting aside separate entities, and taking only the admitted fact that we have ideas of objects in their absence, although such ideas are purely mental modifications, a similar train of thought might be suggested; a reflex transfer of ideas, so to speak, might be made from conception to perception, and what is true of the former ascribed to the latter.

Whether, nevertheless, the doctrine of ideas in perception is ascribable to this origin or not, its utter groundlessness is plain, and the truth remains unaffected that ideas have nothing to do with the perception of external objects — bear no part in the process — but are mental phenomena which take place in the absence of the objects which they represent.

This last expression indicates their essential character. In every possible case ideas are representative; *i. e.* they are invariably representations of some objects which we have formerly perceived, or some internal affections or operations which we have formerly experienced.

They correspond to real objects or events formerly present to the mind, as portraits correspond to their originals. Hume and other metaphysicians, obliged to resort to terms borrowed from material operations, call them copies; others again, in certain cases, call them images; and Mr. Stewart, as we have seen, denominates them transcripts. As in many cases this and similar phraseology may not seem appropriate, it will be needful to enter into some explanations in reference to it, and to my own occasional employment of it, as well as to the more comprehensive term idea.

To avoid repetition and prolixity, philosophers are apt, in the discussion of these subjects, to consider chiefly visible objects, and their mental representations, which may very properly be

termed images. This I myself have done in the preceding speculations, and I may find it convenient to continue to do it in the sequel; but the remarks throughout are just as applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to the representations of emotions and intellectual operations, and also of what we perceive through the other organs of sense, as of what we perceive through the organ of vision. The term *images* is, indeed, not appropriate to the former. We cannot well speak of the image of an emotion such as grief, nor of that of a musical note, or of a fragrant smell; and even to speak of *copies* in such cases seems harsh: but we can conceive or recollect the emotion, the note, and the smell with as much distinctness, if not vividness, as we can call to mind an extended object; and usage allows us in each of these cases to apply the word *idea*. Every one, I presume, can do as I can, who have no particular musical aptitude, namely, go over a favourite air or tune in his own mind as perfectly as he can picture to himself the countenance of a favourite friend, or the forms and colours of a familiar scene; and if any one resembles the poet Wordsworth in not being able to do this, he can at all events mentally repeat the first stanza of Gray's "Elegy in a Country Church Yard," or the opening of Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," or the concluding lines of Campbell's "Pleasures of Hope," or some other celebrated fragment of verse. No recollections, indeed, can be more perfect

than those of measured and rhythmical sounds. In reference to taste and smell, not many probably amongst those who are likely to be my readers would find any difficulty in recalling the peculiar fragrance and flavour of the strawberry and the pine apple. To mark the representative acts or states of mind, in all these cases, the general term idea may be not only correctly employed, but perhaps with less harshness or dissonance than any other.

In order to prevent misconstruction, it may be also needful to explain that in speaking of ideas as mental copies or representations, it is not intended to say that they are always exact representations of individual objects or states; they are sometimes such, and sometimes new combinations, as mentioned under the head of imagining; but in the latter case the simple ideas, or elements out of which they are composed, are derived from objects formerly perceived, or states of mind formerly felt. Amongst philosophers this point is I believe well understood.

You will observe, then, that in my vocabulary the term idea denotes representative intellectual phenomena — phenomena which have their archetypes in real objects and events physical or mental. But I go farther than this. It will be my aim to show, in the following Letters, that there are none but representative affections of the mind to which the term can be correctly and consistently and

without confusion applied; and that when it has been applied, or rather when it has been supposed to be applied, to anything else, there has been a misconception of the phenomena designated, or intended to be designated, on the occasions in question.

I am perfectly aware that, on a first glance, this may appear an arbitrary limitation of its meaning, inasmuch as such things are said to exist as general and abstract ideas; and since we certainly do not perceive any general or abstract objects to match them — the very supposition of such objects being absurd — the alleged general and abstract ideas cannot, it may be argued, be of a representative character.

Moreover, all must admit that we are in the constant use of general and abstract terms, the existence of which, it may be urged, would be unaccountable, if they were not the names of either objects or ideas.

This appears at first sight a formidable difficulty; and it must be met, or my position must be abandoned.

I purpose, therefore, in the two or three Letters immediately following, to inquire into what passes in the mind, or, in other words, what we are conscious of; first, when general terms, and, secondly, when abstract terms, are used.

This I am sensible is not the usual mode of

stating the inquiry; but it is often, I think, exceedingly advantageous to take unsettled questions out of their traditional forms, and put them into different, although in the main equivalent, language.

LETTER XXII.

GENERAL TERMS.

It will conduce to the clear understanding of what passes in the mind on occasion of hearing or using general and abstract language, if we consider in the first place certain phenomena of perception.

When we perceive an external object we may see it either near or at a distance, either in partial obscurity or in broad daylight, either hastily or with a leisurely survey. We may, for example, see a man a quarter of a mile off where we can only just discern that he *is* a man, not a woman or a boy; or we may see him so close as to recognise in him a well-known acquaintance. A difference in the degree of light by which we see him, or in the rapidity with which we pass by him, may produce a similar difference in the distinctness of our perception. In a railway carriage we are sometimes wheeled along with such velocity, that we cannot distinguish the faces of those we pass, but only just perceive they are human beings.

If the objects we have perceived with these

different degrees of distinctness have been seen by us for the first time, our recollections, when we afterwards call them to mind, will partake in this respect of the character of our perceptions. We shall not recollect clearly and definitely an object that we have seen only obscurely and vaguely, however long and minutely we may dwell upon it in thought.

If, on the contrary, the object perceived is a familiar one, as, for example, an intimate friend, although the actual glimpse we catch of him is indistinct and momentary, it is sufficient, except in extreme cases, both to produce a recognition of his person and, if we pause upon the thought at all, to raise up a complete image of the man.

It is astonishing, when we reflect upon it, and at the same time important to remark, what a slight and fugitive glance at an object enables us to recognise it when it is already perfectly familiar to us.

But there is another cause of variety in the distinctness of our recollections besides the character of our original acts of perception.

As the objects perceived may appear faint and ill-defined, from the velocity with which they pass before our eyes, so our recollections of external objects, even when the latter have been leisurely and thoroughly observed, may be faint and ill-defined from an analogous cause; namely, the swiftness with which they pass through our minds,

or, in other words, succeed each other in our consciousness.

This may perhaps be most readily shown in those cases where words are the means of recalling external phenomena.

It is a function of words, and more obviously of the names of external things (which alone it is needful here to consider), to revive in the memory objects formerly perceived.

Confining our attention, then, to the names of external objects, let us first take the case of proper names.

The name of an intimate friend, whom I have just heard mentioned, has brought to my mind a distinct remembrance of his personal appearance, and, in the same way, the names of my other friends, when I dwell upon them, recall their respective personal appearances with all possible vivacity and completeness. But if I hear a long list of such names rapidly read over, the images, as they are usually termed, or mental representations of my friends, will no longer appear before me with the same fulness and distinctness; a faint and fugitive image of each will be all I shall be conscious of. There will be as much difference, in this respect, between the leisurely and the hurried remembrance, as there is between a deliberate survey of the passengers in a railway carriage when it is stationary, and a glimpse caught of them when it is moving swiftly before the sight. Yet, not-

withstanding the velocity of the ideal procession through my mind, and the consequent incompleteness of the several figures in it, I distinctly recognise each transitory form as that of a well-known acquaintance, just as I recognise their actual persons when seen as before supposed by a momentary glimpse in passing.

Let us next turn to the consideration of common names or general concrete terms; names or terms applicable not to a single individual exclusively, but to any one of a number of individuals, or a class.

We shall find that what passes in the mind when common names are heard, corresponds very closely to what takes place when proper names are heard.

This is very obvious in the case of the names of simple objects, such as snow, water, daisy, primrose, harebell, oak-tree. On hearing these words slowly pronounced, I have in my mind as complete and lively an image of the object denoted by each appellation, as I have on listening to a deliberate enumeration of proper names when I am familiar with the personal appearances of the individuals to whom they belong.

There is indeed, it may be alleged, this difference between the two cases, that the proper name ties me down to a particular image, while the general name leaves me at liberty to vary the image within certain limits; or, to describe the matter with greater precision, the proper name raises up the image of one individual object, while the general

name raises up the image sometimes of one individual of the class formerly seen, sometimes of another, not unfrequently of many individuals in succession; and it sometimes suggests an image made up of elements from several different objects by a latent process of which I am not conscious.

This difference between the two cases, although real, is, however, less than, on a first view, we are apt to suppose.

Compare the effect produced by the proper name "*Queen Victoria*," with that which ensues from hearing the common name of some simple object, such as a primrose. Simple flowers of the same species are so much alike, that the image rising up in the mind on hearing the word "primrose" is almost as little varied, on different occasions, as on hearing the words "Queen Victoria." To a person, indeed, who happens to have seen the Queen in diversified states of emotion, and in a variety of dresses and attitudes, not to mention coins and pictures, her image may be even more varied than that of the flower. He may have seen her sitting in solemn state on the throne, with the crown on her head, or driving with cheerful countenance, in a simple bonnet in the park, or talking and laughing in a ball-dress in her own palace; and her image may occur to him with any of these varieties of expression and accompaniment: while the primrose, never, perhaps, having been seen by him, except on a grassy bank, may always present

itself to his mind in that single aspect; and certainly the difference between one primrose and another is never equal to that between the same human countenance under different expressions of feeling.

When the common name belongs to objects of a more complex and diversified character, the range of images that may be called up is much wider. Take the word man, for example. When that common name is used, the image of any man we have ever seen may come into the mind, or an image made up of parts put together without our consciousness, and forming a combination we never actually saw; and if we have time to dwell on the word, multitudinous images may be suggested in succession.

Just as a painter, if asked to draw the human figure, might, without premeditation, sketch a form which, in many particulars, would be unlike any he had before either seen or imagined,—so we are all of us apt to have novel forms (novel as to composition, but not as to component parts) constantly conjured up before us by the power of language, or by other instruments of association.

It appears, then, from this analysis, that no essential difference exists between what passes in the mind when proper names are heard, and when general names are heard. The peculiar feature, in the latter case, may be stated to be, that there is possibly and frequently, but not necessarily, a

greater range in the mental representations called up by any single appellation; still there is nothing but an individual image, or a group or a succession of individual images or representations passing through the mind. It must be obvious, on reflection, that this is, in truth, the only possible effect of general terms. We rank individual objects under a common name on account of their resemblance to each other in one or more respects; and when we use such an appellation, the utmost which the nature of the case allows us to do, whether the name has been imposed by ourselves or others, is to recall to our own minds, or to those of our hearers, the whole of the single objects thus classed together. This is an extreme case, which, no doubt, may happen; but the result is usually far short of such a complete ideal muster, and we recall only a very inconsiderable part, or even sometimes only one, of the objects covered by the general term. It also appears that, if the ideas thus raised up are sometimes vague and indefinite, the same qualities frequently characterise the ideas raised up by proper names, and attend even the perception of external objects. So far as we have proceeded, indeed, nothing has been found in our ideas of things without us, but what has its exact counterpart in the actual perception of objects.

Before concluding my present Letter, I will briefly glance at a large division of general names which deserve especial notice, from their not denoting a

class of objects in the usual sense of that term, like the words man, tree, horse, star; but assuming a sort of identity, by no means real, in the things to which they are applied. The terms light, heat, air, oxygen, hydrogen, silver, gold, exemplify my meaning; in which instances the words are not the names of classes as ordinarily understood, nor yet of collective wholes, but of substances, wherever and in whatever quantity found, possessing certain definite qualities.

These words are, nevertheless, in effect, the names of classes. As what you predicate of a class may be predicated of any individual member of it, so what you predicate of one of these substances is predicable of every portion of it. Gold, for instance, is describable as being yellow, and possessing a certain specific gravity; *i. e.*, any portion of gold has these properties, just as every man has head, trunk, and limbs. There is, to be sure, this difference, that every man is a circumscribed organised being constituting an individual whole, which is destroyed when a certain separation of parts takes place; while every portion of gold, even the minutest, possesses all the properties on account of which the name is bestowed.

For the purpose I have in view, however, this distinction is of no importance. Just as the word man brings before the mind some individual image of humanity, so the word gold raises up the idea

of some piece of gold—some portion of the metal, or some article composed of it.

The same remark may be usefully made respecting the important and very comprehensive general term matter, which is the common name of everything perceived through the organs of sight and touch, not to speak of other organs. When you happen to be thinking about matter with any clearness and distinctness you have in your mental view some particular form of matter, some individual substance formerly observed through one or more of your bodily organs, or perhaps you have a long array of such individual substances in succession. Such is all that definite and precise thinking can possibly yield.

LETTER XXIII.

ABSTRACT TERMS.

We next come to the consideration of what passes in the mind when abstract terms are used; and this, I may venture to say, is a part of the subject that will repay the close attention which it unavoidably requires.

By abstract terms, which should be carefully distinguished from general names, I mean those which do not designate any object or event, or any class of objects and events, but an attribute or quality belonging to them, and which are capable of standing grammatically detached, without being joined to other terms: such are the words roundness, swiftness, length, innocence, equity, health, whiteness.

On reflecting upon what passes in my own consciousness when such terms are used, I find that I think of some object possessing the quality thus abstractly signified. When I hear the word "roundness," I think of a circle or a sphere. If any one talks of swiftness, I think of the flight of an arrow, or of an eagle cleaving the air, or a race-

horse, or an express railway-train in full career, or a flash of lightning; if he mentions whiteness, I think of the snow, or a swan, or a lily, or some other white object.

As a general name may call up a greater variety of images than a proper name, so may an abstract term. While the proper name St. Paul's Church raises a particular image, the common name circle may call up a circle of any size and any colour; and the abstract term roundness may bring to mind, not only a circle of any size and any colour, but the full moon, or a glass globe, or a diamond ring, or a cylindrical pillar, or all these objects in rapid succession.

If any one doubts that proper names, common names, and abstract terms, occasion essentially the same mental phenomena, and differ only in the possible range of images which they raise up, let him specify in precise language what it is that he thinks of, or what passes in his mind when such names and terms are employed.

To put this to the test, let us take three specimens of composition; one of which shall consist chiefly of Proper names, another of Common names, and the third of Abstract terms.

1. Proper names.

"Amongst the company assembled on the occasion in St. James's Palace, we noticed Her Majesty

the Queen, Prince Albert, the Duchess of Kent, the Duke of Cambridge, the Duke of Wellington, the Marquis of Lansdowne, Lord John Russell, and Lord Palmerston."

(I put down these names because the persons indicated are generally known.)

2. COMMON NAMES.

"The China roses, in full bloom, adorned both sides of the cottage-door; beans and peas were blossoming in the garden, the borders of which were gay with pinks and gilliflowers, mingling their rich fragrance with that of a hedge of sweet-briar. The thrush and the blackbird were singing in the neighbouring coppice; and overhead the sky-lark, although to the sight only 'a dusky atom fluttering in the sky,' seemed to the ear a fountain of melody."

3. ABSTRACT TERMS.

"The swiftness with which the news circulated through the half-starved community was surpassed only by the eagerness with which every particular was received, and by the joy which it diffused through the abodes of poverty. Even Disease raised its languid eyes in momentary forgetfulness of its sufferings, and Age was won back to an interest in life."

I will venture to say, that if any one reads over

these three passages with deliberation, the scenes which will be brought before his mind by the last of them will be, if not as distinct and lively and rapidly suggested as those brought by either of the others, yet essentially of the same character, *i. e.*, made up of individual objects. Suppose the paragraph to have been written from personal observation, it is perfectly clear that the writer must have had particular scenes in his mind; and such will spring up in the mind of the reader. It is true that abstract terms appear to require more effort on the part of the reader or hearer, and usually bring before us slight and ill-defined conceptions; but this constitutes no essential distinction, as it is also the case (perhaps less frequently) with words of all kinds, as before explained, when rapidly read or when that rapid reading is listened to. The best way of ascertaining the real power of the words, is to consider the effect they have when we deliberately think of what they denote.

The greater effort required, and the more indefinite conceptions produced, by abstract terms warn the poet to introduce them sparingly into his verses. It is in this way, and not by any specific difference in the ideas raised up, that they tend to impair the lightness and liveliness of composition.

Dr. Johnson's addiction to them is manifest in almost every page of his works; and hence the general heaviness of his poetry, notwithstanding its acknowledged vigour.

An example presents itself at the very opening of "The Vanity of Human Wishes."

> "Let observation, with extensive view,
> Survey mankind from China to Peru;
> Remark each anxious toil, each eager strife,
> And watch the busy scenes of crowded life;
> Then say how hope and fear, desire and hate,
> O'erspread with snares the clouded maze of fate."

The first line, it may be noted by the way, is a remarkable example of that verbal amplification which adds not a jot of meaning to what is connected with it. Strike it out and you leave the sense altogether unimpaired, and of course more forcibly expressed.

A still more conspicuous instance of abstract language occurs in his Prologue spoken by Garrick at the openingof Drury Lane Theatre in 1747.

> "When Learning's triumph o'er her barbarous foes
> First rear'd the stage, immortal Shakspeare rose;
> Each change of many-colour'd life he drew,
> Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new:
> Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign,
> And panting Time toil'd after him in vain.
> His powerful strokes presiding Truth impress'd,
> And unresisted Passion storm'd the breast."

I scarcely need say that general language has degrees of generality, and that the more particular it is the more it approaches the promptness of suggestion in which proper names must be allowed for the most part to possess the superiority.

Sterne was perfectly right when he took a single

captive that he might most powerfully affect his readers with the miseries of imprisonment. By so doing he did all that descriptive language could accomplish.

Although it is truly wonderful with what faint and undefined representations of things we can understand a long discourse, abounding perhaps in abstract and complex terms, even when impetuously delivered, this is analogous to our recognition of individual persons when rapidly passing before us, or when their names are rapidly read over to us, and is really not more marvellous than what we may remark in the velocity of our own spontaneous thoughts when we fall into a reverie or train of reflection or a dream, in which words have little or no share. The exceedingly slight touch-and-go manner, if I may so express it, in which the mind on these occasions passes with lightning speed through a thousand thoughts and yet with a separate comprehension of each, outrivals the instantaneous operation of the electric telegraph itself.

It is not necessary for my present purpose to examine the paradox that words are sometimes understood without exciting any conception at all of what they stand for. I believe the doctrine to be erroneous and to have arisen, like the dogma of abstract ideas, from an inadequate appreciation of the wonderful rapidity of thought and the sufficiency of the slightest retrospective consciousness.

In an ingenious speculation by Dr. Campbell, founded on passages in Berkeley and Hume, it is maintained that words gradually contract in our apprehension the same relations to each other as the things which they signify have amongst themselves. To express it in his own language, "the sounds considered as signs will be conceived to have a connexion analogous to that which subsisteth among the things signified." *

Hence, if any one should enunciate a self-contradictory assertion, "the custom which we have acquired of attributing certain relations to ideas (I borrow the language of Hume) still follows the words, and makes us immediately perceive the absurdity of that proposition." "Immediately," adds Dr. Campbell; "that is, before we have leisure to give that attention to the signs which is necessary in order to form a just conception of the things signified."

Ingenious as the theory of these philosophers is, it will perhaps be found, on examination, rather plausible than solid. Familiar words are, it appears to me, so indissolubly united or rather so identified, with the things they denote, that I doubt whether they can be separated in general from their meaning, such as it happens in any mind to be, even for a moment, except from an imperfection of memory, which is not here in question: and, moreover, the relations spoken of are themselves

* Philosophy of Rhetoric, book 2. chap. 2.

facts that can belong to or be true of nothing but things; and if the relations can be brought to mind by the words, the things themselves might be so too, or, to speak more correctly, must be so.

If the theory had limited itself to asserting that words might contract the power of exciting the same emotions as the objects they signify, it would have been less disputable.

But whether this speculation is accurate or not, it is needless for me to inquire. Whatever it is that passes in the mind when articulate sounds are heard, or their visible signs are read, we may be satisfied that it is the same kind of phenomenon or event in all cases,— at least where there is the same rapidity of utterance, or of visual perusal,—whether the words are proper names, common names, or abstract terms; and this is all that the purpose I have in view requires me to show.

In a word, we can think only of particular objects and events, although with more or less distinctness, whether language is or is not the medium of bringing them to mind, and whatever is the grammatical character of the words employed; that is to say, we can have only particular ideas or conceptions. I am unable myself, I confess, to attain to a clear understanding of what is meant by any other kind of ideas.

It has indeed been maintained by eminent philosophers — as I have already had occasion to notice — that we form in our minds what they term

abstract notions corresponding to the abstract terms employed in speaking or writing; but they have not been hitherto successful in their attempts to show what an abstract notion is. On closely analysing what passes in my own mind, I do not discover that I can think of anything but particular objects and events, either apart or combined, single or numerous, with various degrees of distinctness and completeness. In this personal experience I am happy to find myself supported by Berkeley, from whom I so often differ, in a passage in which, it is to be observed, he speaks indiscriminately of common names and abstract terms.

"Whether others," says he, "have this wonderful faculty of abstracting their ideas they best can tell; for myself I find indeed I have a faculty of imagining or representing to myself the ideas of those particular things I have perceived, and of variously compounding and dividing them. I can imagine a man with two heads, or the upper parts of a man joined to the body of a horse. I can consider the hand, the eye, the nose, each by itself abstracted or separated from the rest of the body. But then, whatever hand or eye I imagine, it must have some particular shape and colour. Likewise the idea of man that I frame to myself, must be either of a white or a black or a tawny, a straight or a crooked, a tall or a low or a middle-sized man. I cannot by any effort of thought conceive the abstract idea above described. And it is

equally impossible for me to form the abstract idea of motion distinct from the body moving, and which is neither swift nor slow, curvilinear nor rectilinear; and the like may be said of all other abstract general ideas whatsoever. To be plain, I own myself able to abstract in one sense, as when I consider some particular parts and qualities separated from others with which, though they are united in some object, yet it is possible they may really exist without them. But I deny that I can abstract one from another, or conceive separately those qualities which it is impossible should exist so separated; or that I can frame a general notion by abstracting from particulars in the manner aforesaid." *

What has been here said of general and abstract terms applies in substance to words of a complex and collective character, such as government, society, civilisation, the age, the church, the army. These are often very abbreviated expressions of many different objects and events; some of them having so wide a meaning that a chapter might be required to draw it out in detail.

They, nevertheless, resemble such general and abstract terms as I have considered in the circumstance which I have had particularly in view: whatever images or ideas they raise up, however numerous or complicated they may be, are separable

* Of the Principles of Human Knowledge. Introduction, sect. 10.

into individual parts or elements corresponding to objects formerly perceived; and consist of nothing else than the representations of such objects, single, or in groups, or in sequences. Like general and abstract language, these terms raise up only representative ideas; and, like them, they often raise up such as are very obscure, vacillating, and indistinct. All these terms, it may be added, or perhaps more properly their significations, are apt to be personified, like the faculties or operations of the mind, and to be treated in speculation as if they were substantive and independent agents. Hence arises, as in the other case, the invention of multitudes of fictitious incidents and operations, which conceal ignorance and satisfy mankind with the semblance of knowledge. This is a subject, however, which, to have justice done to it, would require a treatise to itself.

LETTER XXIV.

ABSTRACT TERMS, CONTINUED.

I HAVE to thank you most cordially for your comments on my two last Letters, and will here quote one passage from them for the sake of the explanation which it has suggested to me.

"Well," says the passage in question, "granting you have proved that abstract terms call up nothing but particular images or representations, this applies only to the power of language. May there not be ideas which rise up in the mind independently of words? Language is an after matter. The objects or events designated by our terms must exist before the terms are applied to them, and the real question is, 'are not such abstract ideas engendered before words can have anything to do with the process?'"

To this I reply, in the first place, that of such ideas I, for my own part, am not conscious; being so constituted as to think of nothing but particular objects and events, or, in other words, to have none but particular ideas, either single, or in groups, or sequences; and, in the second place, that since the

abstract ideas, the existence of which is maintained have been specifically endowed with names, it is of no consequence whether the question is stated in connection with language or not. It may be put in either of two forms: "Are there such things as abstract ideas recalled to the mind by abstract terms?" or, "Are there such things as abstract ideas originally engendered in the mind, and subsequently matched with separate and peculiar appellations?" In either case an answer in the affirmative asserts the actual existence of a mental phenomenon, called an abstract idea, of a non-representative character; and it is this alleged mental phenomenon of which with Berkeley I profess myself to be wholly unconscious. No theorist, as far as I am aware (I speak doubtingly on account of the strange metaphysical speculations which at one time or other have appeared), ever supposed that the abstract ideas which he alleges to exist were originally begotten by the terms employed to denote them; he must admit that they were first engendered and then named.

The subject as stated in the first question I have already examined; let us consider it again as stated in the second. Fortunately for my purpose, I find that to this second question several eminent philosophers have in the most express terms returned an affirmative answer. Mr. Dugald Stewart may be selected as having given as lucid an exposition of that opinion as any other writer.

In criticising his great predecessor Locke, Mr. Stewart maintains that there are certain simple ideas or familiar notions, "which relate to things bearing no resemblance either to any of the sensible qualities of matter, or to any mental operation which is the direct object of consciousness; which notions, therefore (although the senses may furnish the *first occasions* on which they occur to the understanding), can neither be referred to sensation nor to reflection as their *fountains* or *sources*, in the acceptation in which these words are employed by Locke." *

As instances of the notions which he thus vaguely describes, he mentions causation, time, number, truth, certainty, probability, extension; and he cites a passage from Dr. Hutcheson to the same effect as evincing singular acuteness. "Extension, figure, motion, and rest," says the latter writer, "seem to be more properly ideas accompanying the sensations of sight and touch, than the sensations of either of those senses." It is curious enough how Mr. Stewart failed to discern, as he apparently did, that the ideas which he here calls simple are what other philosophers term abstract, and while he considers them as brought into existence on occasion of sensation they regard them as subsequently abstracted from our parti-

* Philosophical Essays, third edition, p. 102.

cular ideas. "The same colour," says Locke, "being observed to-day in chalk or snow which the mind yesterday received from milk, it considers that appearance alone, makes it a representative of all of that kind; and having given it the name whiteness, it by that sound signifies the same quality wheresoever to be imagined or met with: and thus universals, whether ideas or terms, are made."*

Locke, however, it may be remarked in passing, like many other philosophers, does not observe the useful distinction between common names or general concrete words, and abstract terms; and he, as well as others, sometimes designates what the latter terms denote, by the appellation "*simple ideas.*"

Mr. Stewart's doctrine is essentially the assertion of non-representative, in addition to representative, ideas; it maintains that, besides having in our minds copies, as they are called, of what we have perceived and felt, we are conscious of intellectual phenomena which are purely original — not copies or representations of anything else, but coming into independent existence on occasion of our perceiving external objects.

Thus, when we first direct our eyes upon an extended body, we not only, according to Mr. Stewart, see it or have a perception of it, but we have at the same time an idea perfectly distinct

* Essay on Human Understanding, book 2. chap. 11.

from the perception, and relating to *things which bear no resemblance to the sensible qualities of the extended body.*

What can these things possibly be?

Let us try what we can make of all this by an example.

Take a tree for the purpose. When we open our eyes upon it, we observe that it is extended, definitely shaped, with numerous branches and leaves waving in the breeze. All these in common apprehension are things perceived through the organs of sight. But Mr. Stewart, who, I presume, may be considered as admitting this, teaches that while we thus perceive the tree to be extended, figured, presenting multitudinous parts, and moving in the wind, we simultaneously become conscious of the ideas of extension, figure, number, and motion. To confine ourselves, for the sake of clearness, to a single attribute, we have at once the perception of the tree as extended, and the idea of extension; and if, by closing our eyes, we convert the perception into an idea of the tree, we shall be conscious of two ideas—the representative idea of an extended object, and the non-representative idea of extension.

This account of what takes place is even less plausible than that of the philosophers who consider such terms as extension, motion, and the rest to denote ideas formed by abstraction from the attributes of objects previously perceived, and bearing a relation to them.

The two hypotheses, if they may be so styled, are, however, substantially the same, and may be met by the same answer — that we are not conscious of the alleged simple or abstract ideas — that there is nothing corresponding to their names in our minds.

The question resolves itself, in fact, into the one considered in my last Letter.

In whatever way the alleged ideas may be said to originate, their names, or the abstract terms so abundant in speech, must bring them to mind, if they actually exist.

Now, my doctrine is, that as we are unable to perceive, so we are unable to conceive any separate entity corresponding to an abstract term: nor are we conscious of any peculiar mental phenomenon to which that term can be applied. In different language, we have no ideas in the mind answering to such words as extension and motion, but, when they are used, we think of an extended and moving body. Our thoughts on such occasions may frequently be vague, shadowy, indistinct, and fugitive, but their real character is what I have described it to be. Try to think clearly and deliberately of extension, and you will find yourself thinking of some extended substance: try to think clearly and deliberately of motion, and you will find yourself thinking of some moving body.

It is somewhat singular that Mr. Stewart (who was a decided nominalist, and considered that com-

mon names and other general terms do not denote general ideas; that all which is general in the case, lies in the words) should yet maintain that we have ideas corresponding to such general abstract terms as extension, motion, causation, truth, certainty, and the rest. As a nominalist, he would hold that the common name *extended substance* does not denote a substance without particular qualities, nor raise up an idea of such a substance, but recalls one or more particular substances formerly perceived through the organs of sense; and yet he considers the general abstract term *extension* as having a corresponding abstract, or, as he denominates it, simple idea in the mind, or as being the name of such an idea.

He manifestly either was not aware that his "simple ideas" are what others denominate abstract, or did not discern the relation between common names and abstract terms, and that any proposition composed of the latter may be completely expressed in concrete language.

If there are such abstract ideas as he contends for, what becomes of them when their names, as they always may be, are replaced by concrete general terms which fully convey the same meaning, and which he himself maintains, raise up ideas only of particular objects?

The singular attempt of these philosophers to distinguish between what we perceive, and ideas of a non-representative character springing up in the

mind on occasion of perception, was probably owing in part to the habit of regarding the senses as distinct from the mind, and as in themselves unintelligent transmitters to the understanding of information from without, instead of considering the mind just as directly engaged in perceiving objects through the organs of sense as in recollecting, discerning, or reasoning, when the senses are not in activity. They are alike states or modifications of consciousness. Extended substances, figured objects, causes producing effects, bodies moving or resting, are all perceived through these organs; and when they have passed away, or are withdrawn, the mind has or may have ideas of them, but it can have no other ideas relating to material external existences than those which represent such things as have been perceived. Perceiving is the grand original mental operation on which, as far as the material world is concerned, conceiving is altogether dependent, and by which it is rigidly circumscribed. In different language, all our ideas are of a representative character, and cannot be otherwise.

In illustration of the truth that we have no ideas relating to external material things which have not originated in perception, or which are additional to the ideas representing what we have perceived, I venture to assert that there is nothing we can think of regarding external objects, no form into which we can throw our ideas, which we could not

perceive were the objects actually before us: or, in other words, we can have no ideas whatever of external objects, or relating to them, of which the counterparts could not be perceived through the organs of sense, were the objects in presence.

We can, it is true, form in our minds the conception of an object that we have never seen, as is exemplified in the common instance of a golden mountain; but if such an object were set before us, there would be no more difficulty in seeing it than there actually is in conceiving it. The elements out of which the conception was put together — gold and a common mountain — were originally perceived through the eye; and in what way soever such elements are combined in imagination, to the eye they would be perceptible, could a corresponding combination of realities be brought before it.

LETTER XXV.

EXAMPLES OF IMPORTANT GENERAL AND ABSTRACT TERMS.

THE importance of forming a just and clear conception of what passes in the mind when common names and abstract terms are employed, can scarcely be overrated.

It is not going too far to say, that a complete mastery of this part of mental philosophy furnishes a key for most of the difficulties besetting the subject, and throws a powerful light on all speculation whatever. It will be found an invaluable guide through the bewildering mazes of mystical metaphysics. In proof of these assertions, I shall select a few important phrases for examination.

I will draw your attention, in the first place, to the names of those mental phenomena which have occupied so much space in the present series of Letters.

The appellations under which we are accustomed to group the operations and affections of the mind, are nothing but general terms or common denominations. We call one kind of mental action —

one mode of consciousness — perception; another, recollection, and so on; but it must be kept in view that every act of perception is individual, and, however close in resemblance, is different in identity from every other act, just as one pebble on the sea-shore, or one wave that dashes over it, is different in identity from all other pebbles or all other waves.

When, therefore, we make use of the words sensation, perception, and recollection, and speak of other operations and affections of the mind, our language indicates the agreement or resemblance between individual mental acts or individual phenomena of consciousness; and these terms are significant only by raising up in ourselves and others ideas representative of such particular phenomena.

In the whole range of language, perhaps, no word has produced greater perplexity, or at least greater diversity of view, than my next instance—the word cause. After the preceding discussions a little consideration is sufficient to enable us to discern that this word is a common name — the common name of a vast variety of objects and events. We give less general names to the objects and events around us, and include the whole in this great general name.

Thus, the expressions — the sun's rays have blanched the blue curtains, the falling of the chimney killed a man who was walking in the street, the dew has drenched the grass, "those

evening bells" filled me with melancholy emotions — may be converted into others in which the term cause, either as verb or noun, may be introduced to express the same meaning. For example, "the sun's rays have caused the blue curtains to lose their colour," "the falling of the chimney was the cause of the man's death," and so on.

In a similar light, we must regard such expressions as — the wind shakes the trees, fire consumes wood, water drowns land animals, and a thousand others. Shaking, consuming, and drowning, denote so many ways of producing effects, so many modes in which causes operate, so many successions of events.

Or, if you wish for more scientific examples, which are in fact not a whit better than the homeliest and most familiar, take the cases of the electric spark uniting oxygen and hydrogen into water, the moon's attraction raising tides in the ocean, the voltaic battery decompounding soda and potass, the act of breathing producing animal heat. We live amidst the movements of matter, and every change preceding another, as in these cases, is generalised under the name of cause when experience has not shown the sequence to be casual or inconstant.

What I particularly wish to impress on your mind is, that the word cause, like all other general terms, can do no more than bring before our minds some particular instance, such as fire burn-

ing wood, water turning a wheel, the collision of two bodies producing sound, words awakening recollections in the mind; which instances when described are indeed themselves expressed in general language, but less general than the term cause; and when either the more or the less general of these expressions is deliberately considered, a particular picture or representation, however faint, presents itself to us.

If we attempt to go beyond such particular instances, in order to form, as it is usually expressed, the general idea of a cause, we shall be inevitably baffled. We can find only individual cases exhibiting the circumstance common to all, or, to speak more accurately, in which they resemble each other. We may indeed detect or imagine intervening events between any assigned cause and effect, but even if such events can be discovered, the only result will be an addition to the number of things we designate as causes. We shall still come to some thing acting upon another, or some event preceding another; and if we think clearly on the matter, we shall have in our minds the representation of some particular instance of such physical action or consecutive events, or we shall mentally glance over a number of such instances. As, when we think of a triangle, we must think either of an acute-angled, a right-angled, or an obtuse-angled triangle, or of two or more of them in succession; and not, as Locke contends, of a triangle which is none of these:

so when we think of a cause, we must think of some particular event preceding some other particular event, and not of some entity or occurrence which is divested of all particular features.

Those who, like M. Comte, object to designate events as causes, are objecting without any real ground to a mere but extremely convenient generalisation, to a very useful common name; the employment of which involves, or needs involve, no particular theory.

The common name — cause — naturally leads to the consideration of its abstract derivative. The word causation, or (if I may use the term) causingness, or power, will serve to introduce the further elucidation of abstract terms as distinguished from general concrete terms, or common names.

When the word power or causingness is employed, it raises in the mind, like the word cause, the thought of some particular succession of events, or several sequences in turn, and not the thought of something separate from the events.

Hume, following out his doctrine of impressions and ideas, which is in many respects the same as Locke's, and points to an important truth, although expressed in objectionable language, puzzled himself very ingeniously on this subject. He remarks (incorrectly, I think) that all events seem loose and separate; we can never, he proceeds to say, observe any tie between them. "As we can have no idea," he continues, of anything which never

appeared to our outward sense or inward sentiment, the necessary conclusion *seems* to be that we can have no idea of connexion or power at all." And he gets out of the difficulty by supposing that the customary transition of the mind from one object or event to the other, is the sentiment or impression required by his theory, and of which the idea of power is the copy; failing to see the true and simple solution that *power* is nothing but an abstract term, not needing a separate impression to be assigned to it. It is obvious, also, to remark, in consonance with his own theory, that when we actually *see* a cause producing an effect (as, for example, fire consuming wood), there is no *idea* concerned at all; we have a perception, or what he calls an impression, through the organ of sight. And when, the event being past, we think of it, the idea will correspond to the impression; *i. e.* we shall think of the event just as it visibly occurred. Whatever of causation there is in the occurrence, is a matter of direct perception through the organs of sense; and it is only afterwards that it becomes an idea. But the idea to be accurate can change nothing in what we had perceived. We may doubtless feel wonder, or delight, or awe, or other emotions, and we may form a hundred suppositions or inferences that there is something underlying what we discern; and this unknown, vague, and shadowy something we may call power. In proportion, nevertheless, as such a supposition as-

sumes a distinct form, it will be found to be made up of representative ideas.

Hume's remark, already quoted, that all events appear loose and separate, and that we can observe no *tie* between them, deserves also to be particularly noticed as exceedingly curious. What closer connexion can there be, either in fact or in conception, than that which exists between putting a piece of paper into a flame, and its being consumed? And what sort of tie between two events of this kind could he possibly have in contemplation?

Looseness and separateness in things imply that there is between them either an interval of space or an interval of time. But there is manifestly no perceptible interval of space between the flame and the paper, for one is thrust into the other; and there is no appreciable interval of time, for the burning instantly begins.

Where, then, in such cases is there place for any *tie?* And what can the term so employed possibly denote?

Hume, with all his metaphysical acuteness, was here, I suspect, using words without meaning; furnishing an example how easy it is to fall into null or nugatory assertions, when we are so occupied with general terms and propositions as to neglect constant and distinct reference to particular cases.

Perhaps the most remarkable abstract terms,

which it is possible to adduce, are the words which I have just had occasion to use in their popular acceptation — time and space. It may not be at first admitted that these words come under that designation, but a little reflection will, I think, satisfy you, and every other reader, that they are nothing more and nothing less than what I have denominated them.

In regard to time, when that word is employed we think of some object, or of some thought or feeling, that *lasts* or *dures*; or, perhaps, we think of a succession of events. A succession of events, nevertheless, is not essential, since every one in the series *dures*. Nothing can exist at all, whether material or mental, without lasting.

Time is the abstract term which denotes this *lasting* or *during*, just as brightness is the abstract term denoting the quality of being bright. As there is no separate entity represented by the term brightness, so there is none represented by the term *time* or *duringness*.

The word space is, more obviously even than the word time, an abstract term.

It denotes the quality of being extended, and might indeed be replaced by the word *extendedness*.* It can do nothing beyond raising up in the mind the image or conception of an extended object.

* I use the barbarous words *duringness* and *extendedness* to show the analogy of their equivalents *time* and *space* to such terms as steadfastness and brightness.

There is no separate entity represented by the word space or extendedness, any more than by the word brilliancy or brightness.

This may appear inconsistent with the common notions of infinite space and empty space.

By infinite space, however, nothing can be signified but objects indefinitely extended. We can think of no limit being placed to extended objects, because any limit we could think of would be itself extended.

In regard to empty space, the explanation may not appear so obvious. The phrase, however, is really unmeaning, or contains a self-contradiction; and it may be added that we practically know no such thing, the most perfect vacuum we can make being still pervaded by heat, if by nothing else.

Should it be said that, when we have before us a block of granite, we can think of the body itself and the space which it occupies, and which would remain were the granite to be annihilated; it may be replied that, in point of fact, the annihilation of the granite, is as far as our experience extends, a physical impossibility, and were it possible, would not leave an empty space or absolute vacuum; nor can we conceive one. While the granite exists, nothing else exists (to speak in ordinary language) in the same place; if it were annihilated, either something would take its place, or there would ensue the contradiction of an extended nothing. The phrase occupying space means neither more

nor less than being extended; and it is impossible for us to conceive what being extended means but by thinking of an extended object. Speaking of an absolutely empty space is equivalent to speaking of extendedness as existing without anything that is extended — an extended non-entity. I may add that, to support my doctrine regarding the impossibility of conceiving an empty space, I may adduce the authority of both Berkeley * and Hume. †

I may also cite the prior authority of Descartes, not only against the possibility of conceiving empty space, but against the possibility of its existence. He declares "that a vacuum or space in which there is absolutely no body is repugnant to reason."

"With regard to a vacuum," he continues, "in the philosophical sense of the term—that is, a space in which there is no substance—it is evident that such does not exist, seeing the extension of space or internal place is not different from that of body. For since from this alone, that a body has extension in length, breadth, and depth, we have reason to conclude that it is a substance, *it being absolutely contradictory that nothing should possess extension*, we ought to form a similar inference regarding the space which is supposed void — viz. that since there is extension in it, there is necessarily also substance." ‡

* Principles of Human Knowledge, sect. 116.

† Life by Burton, vol. 1. p. 74.; and Treatise on Human Nature, vol. 1, pp. 68. 86.

‡ The Principles of Philosophy, part 2. English translation, 1853.

In noticing on a former occasion the doctrines maintained by the renowned German philosopher Kant respecting the external word, I purposely kept out of sight his extraordinary positions respecting time and space, till I had explained my own views regarding them.

On these subjects, if he did not puzzle himself, but only carried out his doctrines to their legitimate consequences, he certainly both startled and perplexed his readers, by contending that time and space are only forms of thought, or modifications of our sensible intuition, and would perish with the extinction of mind.

When properly viewed, the question, as I have just endeavoured to show, is a very simple one: time and space are nothing more than abstract terms denoting no separate entities, either physical or mental, but simply the qualities of duringness and extendedness in objects; just as brightness is an abstract term signifying no distinct entity, but a quality in certain bodies not detachable from them. Perceiving objects in time and space, according to the common phrase, simply means that we perceive them *dure*, and that we perceive them to be extended, in the same way as we see them to be bright.

The being extended, and the during or lasting, are inseparable constituents or essential attributes of the object; and as to "forms of thought," the perception of the object, with these attributes and

the subsequent conception of it, are the only forms of thought in the whole business.

This, however, does not at all correspond with Kant's views. According to his doctrine, if there were no mind in existence (although objects styled transcendental in his vocabulary must, it is presumed, continue to exist), there would be no time and no space, these being forms of the mind itself (whatever that may mean), or forms which in some inconceivable way it casts over its own perceptions.

My doctrine, on the other hand, leads to the position that even on the supposition of all minds being extinguished, and all abstract terms with them, there would still be things which *last*, and things which are *extended*. To the existence of these the extinction of intelligence would make no difference.

Kant's extravagant doctrine on this subject is undoubtedly a necessary consequence of one of the modes already noticed, in which he speaks of the perception of outward objects.

He terms these perceived objects mere phenomena, and also (as if he regarded the two phrases as equivalent) mere modifications of our sensible intuition. Referring to the rainbow, he says:—"Not only are these drops mere phenomena, but their round form itself, nay, indeed, the very space in which they fall, are nothing, in themselves, but mere modifications or principles of our sensible intui-

tion; the transcendental object, however, remains unknown to us."*

It is perfectly clear that if, as here taught, external objects are nothing but modifications of our sensible intuition, — that is of our consciousness in perception, — the attributes of being extended and of during which constitute so essential a part of all visible and tangible entities, — or, in common language, space and time, — must also be mere mental modifications, and perish with the minds of which they are only forms.

What surprises me is, that when Kant was very logically landed in this absurd conclusion from his own premises, he was not led to suspect some radical error in his method of dealing with the subject: and it is also surprising that he did not discern how inconsistent the doctrine that space and time are mere forms of thought, or modifications of consciousness in the percipient, is with the hypothesis of an unknown transcendental object.

For this transcendental object, being unperceived, could not be invested with these or any other forms of thought (to speak in the Kantian dialect), and must consequently be without extension and without duration; *i. e.* could exist, according to the ordinary phrase, neither in space nor in time; which is very much like being nowhere, or not existing at all. A want of clear and correct views

* Critick of Pure Reason, p. 48.

of the true nature of abstract terms appears to me to manifest itself not only here, but in the construction of his whole elaborately erroneous system.

Similar observations to those I have laid before you respecting space and time, might be made with regard to the terms life, motion, force, truth, and many others, when employed abstractedly. When these words are used we think of a living body, a moving substance, a true proposition, and so forth. Life, and motion, and truth denote no separate entities, but they are exceedingly convenient modes of speech.

I might go on adducing illustrations from all departments of knowledge; but it would be a superfluous labour, which you and every other reader can readily perform for yourselves.

I am aware that all the positions of this chapter will be keenly contested, and my only desire is that they may be maturely considered before they are controverted.

Philosophers (except the followers of Kant, whose view of the matter is, as I have shown, totally different from mine) are not prepared to give up space and time, and the rest of these abstractions, as distinct existences; or, if they stop short of what this implies, they will still be ready to maintain that there are distinct ideas in the mind corresponding to the abstract terms employed.

Lest you should be startled by some of the con-

clusions to which these speculations appear to lead, I must warn you not to overlook the facts that thinking is not only exceedingly rapid and volatile, but that it is accompanied by feeling, and that although we have no abstract ideas corresponding to abstract terms, and no ideas at all but such as are representative, yet that these may be thrown into endless combinations, which may be attended by emotions the most varied in character and intensity. Mental affections of any kind, although perfectly distinguishable from the rest of their class, seldom if ever take place without the concomitance of others, either sensitive or intellectual, or both.

In thinking, for example, of suns and stars indefinitely multiplied in our conception through the fields of ether, we can have in our minds ideas of only particular objects, however multitudinous they may be; but we may feel at the same time deep awe and admiration at such an illimitable array of magnificent luminaries, a swelling elevation of sentiment at the boundless extent of the universe, and a profound veneration for the Great Being to whom we ascribe the whole.

Such feelings doubtless operate to confer a sort of illusive reality or separate existence on the import of abstract terms such as space and infinity, and render it difficult to form a clear estimate of what is actually conceived; but they do not at all change the real character of our conceptions.

Further, we may draw innumerable inferences, of the most important alike and of the most trivial nature, as well as picture to ourselves imaginary scenes and events of endless variety: but as the finest strains of melody and harmony resolve themselves, when analysed, into a few musical notes, and the richest outpourings of the poet and the orator into a few articulate sounds, so, whatever we can imagine or infer, invent or conjecture, wild, grand, and awful as it may be, will be found to be made up of nothing but representative ideas.

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

NOTE A.—LETTER III.

The following extracts on the subject of this Letter, and in support of its general views, will probably be welcome to the inquirer who wishes to see important questions exhibited in the peculiar lights of various minds, especially as some of the passages are from writings perhaps not readily accessible. The author scarcely needs to add that, in presenting them to his readers, he by no means adopts every opinion or every expression which they contain. The first is from a writer now seldom referred to: —

"According to this manner of considering power, it is absolutely contradictory to maintain the unity of the mind, and yet to suppose the existence of distinct intellectual faculties or powers. If the primary cause in one *series* be different from the primary cause in another, we cannot refer both these *series* to the same principle. If we trace an action to the will, a recollection to the memory, or a judgment to the understanding, how shall we pretend that there is yet a more remote principle? By what inference shall we conclude that the power of imagination is derived from anything else; or that the faculty of comprehension is the delegate of any superior intelligence? All these separate powers are primary causes; at least,

they are so to our understandings, if we can trace only to them any *series* of causes and effects. To say, then, that power is a primary, or creative, cause, is to admit that it is a principle, and in admitting it to be a principle, we must conclude against the unity of the human soul, while we continue to insist upon the existence of distinct mental powers." — *Academical Questions, by Sir Wm. Drummond*, p. 6.

The next extract is from a work of the celebrated Broussais, translated from the French, and published in the United States, by a gentleman who emigrated a long time ago from this country, where he is still remembered as the author of an able volume of Ethical and Political Tracts: —

"What we call attention, perception of external objects, perception of our own thought or consciousness, idea, judgment, reasoning, memory, are not specific faculties, separate entities inhabiting the brain, put into action by the impressions that proceed from the senses, or by some pretended internal force independent of them, as has been asserted of *le moi*, or of consciousness, and of the memory; they are no other than varieties of cerebral perception, which we may observe as facts or phenomena, but which we cannot venture to explain. Still less are we permitted to adopt the poetry of metaphysics, and to personify these varieties or modifications, for the purpose of explaining the superiority of one over the rest, or the influence they exercise one over another, as active principles; for we cannot do this without treating these phenomena as if they were bodies cognizable by the senses, with which, in fact, they have nothing to do, for they can resemble nothing but themselves."—*On Irritation and Insanity, by F. J. V. Broussais, translated by Thomas Cooper, M.D., President of the South Carolina College*, p. 133.

The views of Dr. Thomas Brown on this subject are well known, but the following short extract is too much to the purpose to be withheld: —

"Still less, I trust, is it necessary to repeat the warning, already so often repeated, that you are not to conceive that any classification of the states or affections of the mind, as referable to certain powers or susceptibilities, makes these powers anything different or separate from the mind itself, as originally and essentially susceptible of the various modifications of which these powers are only a shorter name. And yet what innumerable controversies in philosophy have arisen, and are still frequently arising, from this very mistake, strange and absurd as the mistake may seem. No sooner, for example, were certain affections of the mind classed together as belonging to the *will*, and certain others as belonging to the *understanding* — that is to say, no sooner was the mind, existing in certain states denominated the understanding, and in certain other states denominated the will, than the understanding and the will ceased to be considered the same individual substance, and became immediately, as it were, two opposite and contending powers in the empire of mind, as distinct as any two sovereigns with their separate nations under their control; and it became an object of as fierce contention to determine whether certain affections of the mind belonged to the understanding or to the will, as, in the management of political affairs, to determine whether a disputed province belonged to one potentate or to another. Every new diversity of the faculties of the mind, indeed, converted each faculty into a little independent mind; as if the original mind were like that wonderful animal, of which naturalists tell us, that may be cut into an almost infinite number of parts, each of which becomes a polypus as perfect as that from which it was separated. The only difference is, that those who

make us acquainted with this wonderful property of the polypus, acknowledge the divisibility of the parent animal, while those who assert the spiritual multiplicity are at the same time assertors of the absolute indivisibility of that which they divide."—*Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind, by Thomas Brown, M.D.*, vol. i., p. 365.

The three extracts which follow are from a writer manifestly more remarkable for acuteness than courtesy. They are, however, worth the attentive consideration of the student: —

"Their other instrument of proof is, also, an abuse of language; and a very copious source of error and delusion. They personify an abstract term, and then ascribe to it, literally, the qualities of an agent. This is in the way of the rhetorical Sir James. It is more surprising that Butler should have been deluded by so poor a fallacy.

"Our appetites, say they, have their objects, each its own, at which it aims as its end; our appetite of food, for example; our appetite of drink; the sexual appetite; and so of other propensities. None of these has the augmentation of the sum of our enjoyments as its object.

"Is it not miserable to build a philosophical doctrine upon such a juggle of words? Would not a moderate portion of reflection have sufficed to tell these men, that appetite is merely a name; that nothing really desires, or appetizes (to make a cognate word); nothing has an object or an end; nothing aims, but a man. And when a man aims at an object, and that a selfish one, is it not trifling to tell us, that it is his appetite which aims, and not he; therefore, he is disinterested?"—*A Fragment on Mackintosh*, p. 72.

"The next of Butler's two truths, panegyrized by Sir James, is, that conscience has a controlling power over man's other propensities.

"There is here the same mystery of personification as we have had to deal with in regard to the appetites.

"What a man's conscience is said to do, the man does; when the man's conscience is said to control, the man controls. But how ridiculous would any person be held who should go about to tell us in lofty phrase that a man has a right to control himself?

"If it be replied, that the man *ought* to govern himself in a certain way, we grant it. Nobody denies it, or ever did. But we ask, *why* ought he? That question has long been asked. And surely it is no answer to tell us that conscience has a right to direct the way; for that only brings us round to the same point, that the man has a right to direct the way."—*A Fragment on Mackintosh*, p. 74.

"It is for the benefit of exemplifying strongly to the young the tendency of vague and circuitous language in philosophy, that there is any use in attending to Sir James. For that reason, we notice the two sentences which he gives us next. '*Conscience may forbid the will to contribute to the gratification of a desire. No desire ever forbids will to obey conscience.*' All this personification of certain mental phenomena; one phenomenon forbidding another phenomenon; one phenomenon contributing to the gratification of another phenomenon; a certain phenomenon never forbidding a certain phenomenon to obey a third phenomenon; is, in itself, rank nonsense. And when you apply to it the only rational meaning of which it is susceptible, it is a trite, or rather nugatory observation; neither more nor less than this, that it is sometimes immoral to obey a desire; but it is never immoral to obey conscience in opposition to a desire; which seems to come to this, that it is moral to act morally, immoral to act immorally. And this is the sum and substance of Sir James's 'theory.'"—*A Fragment on Mackintosh*, p. 118.

Sir G. C. Haughton, the author of the work from

which the next passages are taken, held very decided opinions, often well and instructively expressed, on the delusions of language; but he appears to me not to have completely mastered his own views, and he fell into some singular inconsistencies.

"The effect of Realism in our minds, in leading us to convert these airy nothings into entities, cannot be more plainly exhibited than in the universal use of them as faculties of the mind. Thus we speak of our Will, our Judgment, our Fancy, our Imagination, our Understanding, &c., as realities that form part of our intellect; though we can, in truth, only say that *we*, that is, our intellectual nature, wills, judges, fancies, imagines, understands, &c. But this subject is of too much importance to be more than alluded to here; and it will accordingly, be more appropriately considered hereafter."—*Prodromus, or an Inquiry into the First Principles of Reasoning, by Sir Graves Chauncy Haughton*, p. 35.

"Of all the Faculties of the Mind, there being none so important as the *Understanding*, I commence with it. The first great delusion we are under, is in supposing that the word Understanding represents anything whatsoever. We, that is, our thinking selves, may *understand* what we hear or see; but when we employ the Abstract word Understanding, for some part of ourselves, we do so clearly by a fallacy. When we *understand* anything, we necessarily *feel, are conscious*, and *intelligent:* and were I to analyse the term Understanding according to the usual mode in these cases, I would consequently say, that it is compounded of Feeling, Consciousness, and Intelligence. For if I analyse one Abstraction, I shall most likely do it by the help of others; but, in reality, there is neither Understanding, Feeling, Consciousness, nor Intelligence; and, instead of these, we must remember that it is the union of soul with matter, which, being organized into human frames, *understands, feels, is conscious* and *intelligent.*

This, I think, is sufficiently obvious; and I now proceed to say the same of some other of the most remarkable of our Faculties.

"We talk of the Faculties we call Memory, Imagination, Judgment, Will, Attention, Reflection, &c.; but it is obvious we must do the same with these Abstractions as with the Understanding, and remember, that all we can truly say is, that we, our individual selves, can *remember*, imagine, judge, will, attend, reflect, &c., and nothing more. Consequently, the supposition of Faculties, upon which we so often draw, is a mere conventional form of speech; and, however expedient or inevitable this course is, we ought never to forget its real nature when we investigate such matters, otherwise we shall only delude ourselves, and mislead others. We call these Abstractions 'Faculties,' and 'Powers,' but it is only by a sort of figure of speech; and yet men go on gravely discussing the nature of these Faculties as realities of which there can be no doubt. We likewise forget that the words Faculty and Power are both Abstract Terms."—*Ibid.*, p. 196.

After these very explicit declarations on the part of Sir Graves the reader is startled by the following extraordinary position:—

"Of all the divisions into which we separate 'The Mind,' *Reason* is the only one which is not a misconception arising from the delusive nature of language It is not a Faculty, but a *real Agent*, aiding and assisting the Intellect of Man in all its varied operations. Upon what grounds I make this assertion must be deferred for the present; as it would not merely involve me in a disquisition of a length disproportioned to the other questions which I have selected for discussion, but because it will appear more appropriately hereafter, in connection with that to which it has never been suspected to be related: and all I have to say will, consequently,

then, be better understood than it could be in this place. In doing so, I do not ask the reader for any admission, but merely that he will suspend his judgment till I can produce all the evidence necessary to leave no doubt of the truth on his mind; and he will then see why *Instinct* never errs; while Reason, of which we are so proud, is ever in danger of going astray."—*Ibid.*, p. 197.

The evidence here spoken of, as far as the present writer can learn, has never been produced, and probably never will be, as Sir Graves Haughton, he believes, died in France a year or two ago.

In a little work of much merit occurs the following simple and lucid statement in relation to the so-called faculties of the mind:—

"When we perceive or think of two objects, we do not merely think of them separately; but most often we compare them together, and determine that they are like or unlike; equal or unequal, &c. Judgment is this act of the mind in comparing together two or more objects or notions, and in forming some kind of proposition expressive of the relation which has been perceived. The judgment is often spoken of as if it were a distinct power or faculty of the soul, differing from the imagination, the memory, &c., as the heart differs from the lungs, or the brain from the stomach. All that ought to be understood by these modes of expression is, that the mind sometimes compares objects or notions;—sometimes joins together images; sometimes has the feeling of past time with an idea now present, &c. When it is said that such a one has much imagination, and but little judgment, or of another, that he has an acute judgment but no imagination;—it is intended to say, that one mind is most apt to conceive and to compare *differences* among objects or notions; while another is occupied by *resemblances* and

analogies, and attracted by what is beautiful and sublime." —*Elements of Thought by Isaac Taylor*, 2nd ed. p. 133.

A work was published in the United States, many years ago, under the title of a "Treatise on Language," which contains some sound views on the mind and its faculties rather curiously expressed. It is entirely occupied, as the preface confesses, with the elucidation of one precept, namely, "to interpret language by nature."

A specimen or two will show the peculiar tone of thought and phraseology in relation to mental science.

"In what consists the consciousness of a man? in what consists his identity? have been debated, and they are still debated, with the most surprising ignorance of the delusion which gives to the questions their perplexity. Consciousness is supposed to possess as much natural oneness as it possesses verbal oneness; while, in truth, the consciousness of a man is the many phenomena to which the word refers,—precisely as the wealth of a man is the various items of his property to which the word wealth refers."—*A Treatise on Language, by A. B. Johnson*, p. 63.

"All that has been said in relation to the oneness and identity of external existences (as compared with the oneness and identity of their names), applies even more violently to internal feelings than to sights, sounds, tastes, feels, and smells. In treatises, for instance, which have been written on our passions, appetites, emotions, &c., the internal feelings, &c., which give significancy to the word love, are enumerated not as the meaning of the word love, but as the acts and propensities of a mysterious unit, love, who holds his seat in the heart. *Wisdom, reason, judgment, conscience, instinct, and numerous kindred units, are crowded into the head, where, on invisible tripods, they sit and hold divided dominion over the conduct, thoughts, and feelings of the man in whom they are situated.*"—*Ibid.*, p. 140.

NOTE B.—LETTER IV.

Sir Wm. Drummond, in his "Academical Questions," gives us an amusing account of various metaphors applied to the mind.

"Aristotle, and after his example, some modern philosophers, have pretended, that the soul is entirely passive during our first infancy. They compare it to a *tabula rasa*, upon which (in the language of the Peripatetics) the forms of things are impressed. Not more conjectural, and surely more sublime, was the Platonic doctrine, which taught the pre-existence of the immaterial soul, and according to which it was supposed that the spiritual and incarnate effluence of universal mind gradually awakes to reminiscence and intelligence, after its first slumber has passed in its corporeal prison.

"In what manner, it may be asked, and in what season of life, does human intellect proceed from its passive to its active state? How does the *tabula rasa* receive the forms of things; and when it has received them, how does it become enabled to combine, to alter, and to decompose them?

"We have, no doubt, to admire the variety of those analogies, and the happy choice of those figures, tropes, and metaphors by which different writers have expressed the state of the mind. Sometimes the human intellect is likened to a piece of wax; sometimes to a dark chamber; and sometimes to a sheet of white paper. Here it is a physical point in the midst of a material system, or the intelligent centre of a sphere of attraction and repulsion. There it is placed in a conglomerate gland, which secretes

the animal spirits from the blood. Now we hear of a *sensorium*, the proper seat of the soul; now we are informed that the mind is a stationary monad, which neither acts nor is acted upon; and now we are shown a curious and complicated machine, where ideas and nervous vibrations are proved to be exponents of each other; where the nature of sensations is illustrated by the strings of a harpsichord; and where mental *phenomena* are explained by hints taken from the *pendulum* of a clock. A grave logician of the North talks of ideas being *lodged* in the understanding; and a celebrated French metaphysician makes us mount to a garret in a castle, to have a peep at the country through a hole in the shutter.

"Now, although it be very difficult to speak of the mind, without employing figurative language, and without borrowing something from analogy; yet it is altogether unphilosophical to build an argument on a trope, or a system on a *simile*. There is perhaps no harm in comparing the infant mind to a sheet of white paper, if this be done for the sole purpose of facilitating the comprehension of a metaphysical and abstruse question. In the same manner we may illustrate the nature of the soul by the help of other figurative expressions, provided we do not confound the thing of which we are speaking, with the thing with which it is compared. There, therefore, was impropriety, because there were false conclusions, when Aristotle accounted for the *phenomena* of memory, by supposing the forms of things to be really impressed upon the brain — when Locke argued that the soul receives early sensations by a passive power — and when other philosophers reasoned analogically from matter to mind, until they left their readers to forget, that no analogies can be drawn from the one to the other, except in cases where we speak of laws universal with respect to all beings."—*Academical Questions, by Sir Wm. Drummond*, p. 26.

In another part of the same work the author says:—

"Nothing has contributed more to render the ideal system obscure, than the inaccuracies into which we are often betrayed in our habits of thinking from our habits of speaking. As language was not invented by philosophers, nor formed for their use, it cannot be expected, that in common life we should speak with that precision which philosophy demands. In science it is necessary that all the terms be accurate; but in conversing or writing upon ordinary topics, this exactness is impracticable, and if it were practicable, would not be desirable. Figurative language, when not carried to excess, is highly agreeable to taste and imagination. It gives splendour to poetry, lustre to eloquence, expression to passion, dignity to sentiment, and poignancy to wit. It is the elegant mantle which Delicacy throws over all that is gross, or vulgar, or deformed. It is the splendid robe of Fancy, and the graceful dress of the Muses. Nevertheless, it is this same license in speech, this free and various colouring of thought, which chiefly helps to perplex us in the study of logic, or the science of metaphysics; and, indeed, in all our inquiries concerning our mental constitution."—*Academical Questions*, p. 408.

NOTE C.—LETTER VI.

To the other various illustrations of the proper method of viewing the faculties, I will add one from Addison. It might have been included with the rest under Note A, but will come very appropriately as an appendage to the Letter on the classification of mental phenomena.

"The soul consists of many faculties, as the under-

standing, and the will, with all the senses both outward and inward; or, to speak more philosophically, the soul can exert herself in many different ways of action. She can understand, will, imagine, see, and hear; love and discourse, and apply herself to many other the like exercises of different kind and natures; but what is more to be considered, the soul is capable of receiving a most exquisite pleasure and satisfaction from the exercise of any of these its powers, when they are gratified with their proper objects; she can be entirely happy by the satisfaction of the memory, the sight, the hearing, or any other mode of perception. Every faculty is as a distinct taste in the mind, and hath objects accommodated to its proper relish.

"The happiness may be of a more exalted nature in proportion as the faculty is so; but, as the whole soul acts in the exertion of any of its particular powers, the whole soul is happy in the pleasure which arises from any of its particular acts. For, notwithstanding, as has been before hinted, and as it has been taken notice of by one of the greatest modern philosophers [Locke], we divide the soul into several powers and faculties, there is no such division in the soul itself, since it is the whole soul that remembers, understands, wills, or imagines. Our manner of considering the memory, understanding, will, imagination, and the like faculties, is for the better enabling us to express ourselves in such abstracted subjects of speculation, not that there is any such division in the soul itself." — *The Spectator, No.* 600.

NOTE D. — LETTER XVII.

It is rather remarkable that so clear a writer as Berkeley must be allowed to be, should have been so frequently

misunderstood and misrepresented. This observation applies, as will be seen at a glance by any moderately well-informed metaphysician, to the opening of Dr. Darwin's section "Of the Production of Ideas," in his "Zoonomia," vol. i.

"Philosophers have been much perplexed to understand, in what manner we become acquainted with the external world; insomuch that Dr. Berkeley even doubted its existence, from having observed (as he thought) that none of our ideas resemble their correspondent objects."

Here the author of "Zoonomia" is altogether wrong. Berkeley did not doubt the existence of an external material world, but contended that its existence as commonly apprehended is impossible; neither did his doubt, or rather denial of its existence, arise "from having observed that none of our ideas resemble their correspondent objects;" inasmuch as he maintained that there are no correspondent objects—that there are ideas and nothing besides. The only ideas in his theory which could be spoken of as bearing or not bearing a resemblance to anything else, are what he calls copies of the other ideas; that is, in fact, ideas of ideas, which of course must, if correct, resemble their archetypes.

NOTE E.—LETTER XXII.

Horne Tooke, who gave his great work the title of "Winged Words," *επεα πτεροεντα*, thus contrasts words with thought in point of velocity:—

"The first aim of Language was to *communicate* our thoughts: the second, to do it with *dispatch*. (I mean

entirely to disregard whatever additions or alterations have been made for the sake of beauty, or ornament, ease, gracefulness, or pleasure.) The difficulties and disputes concerning Language have arisen almost entirely from neglecting the consideration of the latter purpose of speech; which, though subordinate to the former, is almost as necessary in the commerce of mankind, and has a much greater share in accounting for the different sorts of words. Words have been called *winged;* and they well deserve that name, when their abbreviations are compared with the progress which speech could make without these inventions: but compared with the rapidity of thought, they have not the smallest claim to that title. Philosophers have calculated the difference of velocity between sound and light: but who will attempt to calculate the difference between speech and thought! What wonder then that the invention of all ages should have been on the stretch to add such wings to their conversation as might enable it, if possible, to keep pace in some measure with their minds! Hence chiefly the variety of words." — *The Diversions of Purley*, vol. i. p. 26.

He makes another remark on the subject of abbreviations, which, although not immediately related to the rapidity of thought that the preceding passage was cited to illustrate, forms so appropriate a sequel to the passage, and is so valuable in itself, that the reader will, I doubt not, thank me for presenting it to him :—

"It seems to me," says F., the other interlocutor in the dialogue, "that you rather exaggerate the importance of these abbreviations. Can it be of such mighty consequence to gain a little time in communication?"—"Even that," replies H., "is important. But it rests not there. A short, close, and compact method of speech answers

the purpose of a map on a reduced scale: it assists greatly the comprehension of our understanding: and, in general reasoning, frequently enables us at one glance to take in very numerous and distant important relations and conclusions; which would otherwise totally escape us."—*Ibid.*, vol. ii. 8vo ed. p. 508.

NOTE F.—LETTER XXIII.

THE subjoined passage is remarkably clear, notwithstanding a little confusion between "ideas" and "terms," and a neglect or an oversight of the important distinction between general and abstract words: —

"The very nature of abstraction is unreal and imaginary; it depends upon the negation of every determinate property or idea. No number of cyphers can, by any arithmetical process, be made to produce an unit; neither can a process of the mind consisting of a negation, bring forth anything positive. Red, and blue, and yellow, and the other colours, each individual ideas, are all distinguished by the general name Colour. By the term we understand one great class of perceptions, different from all others, but bearing a certain relation among themselves, and having a point of similitude in which they all agree. The term is general because it is applicable to each and every one of the individuals of the class. By a false appearance of unity, general ideas have misled many to imagine them to be real substances; and that the individuals stood in relation to them as properties do to the internal cause by which they subsist. But this unity is wholly ideal. It is even improper to say that a general ideal is one composed of all the individuals of the class, for it is no compleat idea at all, it is only a commodious

term that we apply to any of the several ideas to which it stands. The term Colour applies to blue, to red, and to yellow; but is not an idea composed of those and all other colours. The idea is indefinite, and may less be called an idea than a symbolical term.

"From the ideas we have of a horse, an owl, a whale, and of other beasts, we form the abstract notion of Animal. Under this term we do not conceive, much less imagine to exist, a thing that is neither man, horse, nor fish. The abstraction implies no nature or property essentially new or different from the individual impressions which form its basis, it is used to mean each indifferently, and is merely to be considered as a convenience toward the apprehension of our own thoughts, and the communication of them to others. What an egregious mistake would it be, instead of understanding this abstracted notion to be a help to apprehension, we should run away with the fancy that it was the type and proper semblance of a being that was neither fish, beast nor fowl, yet consisted of all of them; a thing existing neither in time nor place, yet time and place should be necessary to its existence; made up of body and soul, yet possessing neither! I do not know that any one has been guilty of this very absurdity; but the instances are innumerable where this folly has been committed on the same principle, where the procedure was equally visionary, and the inference full as ridiculous.

"The regions of Metaphysics have been crowded by such imaginary creatures. It is not surprising that the plain men of the world should be scared by these chimeras from setting foot upon this ground."—*An Essay on the Nature and Existence of a Material World*, p. 29. 1781.

Dr. Parr says of this work, that it "abounds with pleasantry as well as abstruse reasoning. The style is perspicuous and elegant, and the model formed upon that

of Mr. Hume." After condemning its unqualified scepticism, the Doctor adds, "During the controversy upon materialism, between Priestley, Price, and others, Priestley met with this book; he was struck with the talents of the writer, he eagerly enquired after him for several years, and at last he was informed that his name was Russel, and that he had left England for the West Indies."

THE END.

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